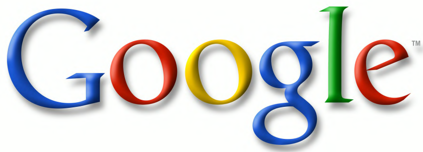

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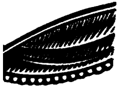

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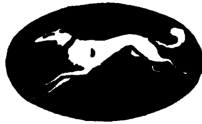

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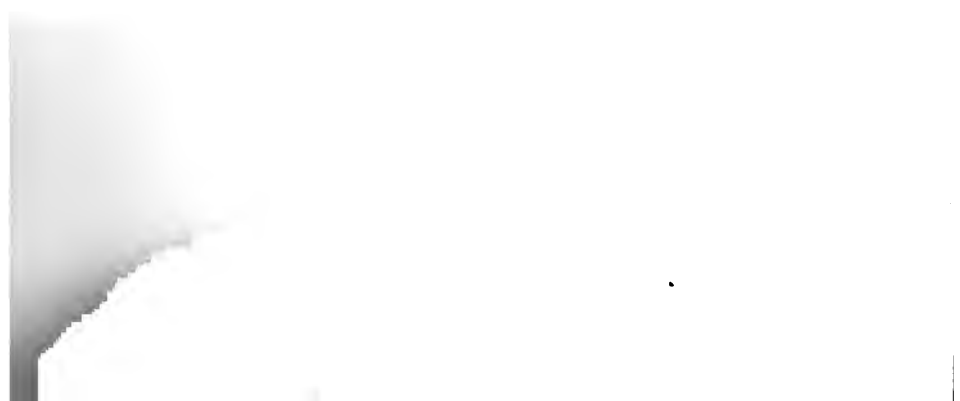
THE THEATRE, THE DRAMA, THE GIRLS



§ 1

Confession of Faith.—I admire Shakespeare and Florenz Ziegfeld. I admire Gerhart Hauptmann and Ann Pennington's dancing. I am amused by the plays of Sacha Guitry, Hermann Bahr and Arthur Schnitzler, and by George Bickel's fiddle-tuning act. I laugh before Congreve and Wycherley, Williams and Wolfus, Oscar Wilde, Harry Watson, Jr., Paul Giafferi, Bernard Shaw, Raymond Hitchcock, Felix Gandera, Ludwig Thoma, de Flers and de Caillavet, and Frisco. I consider George M. Cohan a more expert playwright than Euripides or Calderón, and Lope de Vega one of the worst that ever lived. I regard Victor Herbert the peer of Franz Lehar, and the superior of Emmerich Kalmann. John Palmer is to me the best dramatic critic writing in English at the present time, and Richard Burton the poorest. I can see nothing—or next to nothing—in the acting of Nance O'Neil, Robert Mantell, Walter Hampden, Louis Calvert and Lillah McCarthy. I believe that Marie Löhr is the only proficient comparatively young actress on the contemporaneous British stage. I be-

lieve that the modern German, Austrian and Hungarian comedy is the most original, and that the English is the least. Aside from the younger Guitry, I believe that Robert Dieudonné is the gayest of present-day French boulevard farceurs. I think that Zoë Akins' "Papa" is the best thing of its fantastic kind in modern theatrical literature. I admire Mrs. Fiske, the comedienne, and suffer the tsetse under Mrs. Fiske, the dramatic actress. I would rather see the "Midnight Frolic" once than Gorki's "Nachtasyl" twice.

I venerate Molière and Annette Bade's legs. I admire A. H. Woods above David Belasco; neither is an artist; neither has artistic convictions; and Woods makes no bluff about it and makes four times as much money. I respect William Collier's extraordinary technical skill in the projection of comic material, but I am dead tired of him. Augustus Thomas impresses me as a hanswurst; his process of playmaking is technically sound, but so is the process of making Port du Salut cheeses; his mind is the mind of a sentimental Harvard boy, and he writes the way Thorstein Veblen thinks. It would take a bribe of at least $1,000 to get me to go to see another play by Percy MacKaye or Charles Rann Kennedy. I would rather watch Dorothy Dickson dance than James K. Hackett act. I like to read the plays of Molière, but I do not care

to see them in the theatre. Sarah Bernhardt is a really great actress, but the sight of the old girl stumping around a stage with that wooden leg affects me as a flea in the pot-au-feu. Although I admit that François de Curel is a very fine dramatist, most of his plays fail to move me. I have respect for Brieux, the comedian of "Les Hannetons," and low groans for Brieux, the tragedian of "Maternité."

As I see it, "It Pays to Advertise" is perhaps the most typically American play of the last ten years. The Russian Stanislavski, a name that American critics who have never been nearer Russia than a dish of caviar are happy to conjure with, strikes me as a very proficient but considerably overestimated producing artist. He is a child of Gordon Craig out of Max Reinhardt. I see Grace George as a first-rate comedienne who has choked herself into a premature discard through a vanity that has brought her to surround herself with second-rate ancients in third-rate ingénue shows. I always enjoy the Winter Garden, however poor the spectacle: if I could smoke when I watched him, I might even enjoy the performances of Lou Tellegen. I respect Björnson, but his plays escape my personal fervours. This is true also of D'Annunzio. When in Paris, the first theatre I go to is always the Port Saint-Martin, the second the Variétés, the third the Com-

édie, and the fourth the Marigny. The rest come haphazard. In Berlin, I make an initial set for the Kleines and follow it up with the Deutsches and Kammerspiele. In Vienna, my first ballot is generally for the Residenzbühne, and in London for the Kingsway. One of the most interesting theatres in Europe to me is the Kamerny, in Moscow; another, the Künstler, in Munich. I have never been able to detect the slightest sign of talent in Jane Cowl.

I believe that the American music show, at its best, has never been approached, even remotely, in the European theatre. I still consider Arthur Hopkins what I considered him seven years ago: the first producer of the native theatre. Further, so far as I have been able to make out, he is the one and only professional producer we have who has something of the artist in his soul. I believe that the eminence of the Barrymores is due not so much to themselves as to the eminence of the dramatists whose plays they have astutely chosen for themselves. I should like to see De Wolf Hopper in straight comedy: with proper direction, he would make an excellent dramatic comique. I can find very little in the Spanish drama to interest me, despite the fact that I originally approached it with a mind prejudiced in its favour. If there has ever lived a more tiresome dramatist in the theatre than

Tolstoi, please notify me. I suppose that I am one of the few persons who believe that, next to "The Father," "The Dream Play" is the best thing that Strindberg wrote. I have never been able to appreciate the various masterpieces of Granville Barker: his theories are interesting, but his manœuvering of those theories smacks of the consciously saucy amateur. I am probably the only man in the world who believes that "The Wild Duck" is, of all Henrik's plays, the most engaging theatrically. The work of Lucien Gleize, Harold Brighouse, Thaddeus Rittner and Otto Soyka, and of the Hungarian Hellai, Molnar and Hajo always interests me, even when it is bad. I am also interested in the work of Sidney Chaplin, Charlie's brother: this Sidney is in my estimation the first of the movie comedians; his "The Plumber" is by all odds the best motion picture slapstick farce that I have laid an eye to.

I have read, or seen, twelve of the thirteen plays of Georg Kaiser—but I still remain unconvinced. I have never been able to share, in any degree, the enthusiasm over the late William Vaughn Moody's "The Great Divide": it has ever impressed me as distinctly fifth-rate stuff. I have never seen a really pretty girl on either the French or German stage, and I have looked. I am perhaps one of the few men living who read Shakespeare for diver-

sion. Rarely a week passes that I do not re-read at least a dozen scenes at random. I like Al Jolson. I have a fond ear for Brahms and Irving Berlin. I believe that though "The Gods of the Mountain" is Dunsany's best work, it is not so effective in the theatre as his "Laughter of the Gods." The worst dramatic criticism being written in Europe today is the French: I haven't read a single thing of this sort out of France in the last eight years that has been worth a damn. As good a piece of theatrical reporting as I have read from an American hand is Arthur Ruhl's "Second Nights." I consider Rip the most amusing of present-day French librettists, and Bernhard Pankok the most ingenious costume designer in Germany. I greatly admire Adolphe Appia, yet I prefer Gordon Craig undiluted. I believe that I laughed harder when I first saw George Birmingham's "General John Regan" in London than I have ever laughed in a theatre, although there was a paint-smearing act in a Winter Garden show five or six years ago that unloosed me nobly. I hope that young F. Scott Fitzgerald will turn from the one-act form to the three-act form one of these days: I feel that he will confect a genuinely diverting comedy. He has a good sense of character, a sharp eye, a gracious humour, and an aptitude for setting down adolescent dialogue that Tarkington has rarely matched.

Among the new and younger writers for the American theatre, I have the greatest faith in Eugene O'Neill. I doubt that Zoë Akins will ever again come anywhere near her "Papa": beside it, her "Déclassée," for all its flavour, is so much whangdoodle. Like Mark Twain, I would rather look at Rosie Quinn with scarcely *any* clothes on than at John Philip Sousa in his full uniform. I have never been able to detect anything of the slightest value in the dramatic criticisms of Arthur Symons or Romain Rolland. Edward Sheldon's "Song of Songs" seems to me to be the best dramatization of a novel that I have encountered in the sixteen years of my professional American theatre-going. Rachel Crothers' "Old Lady 31" is the next best. I believe that John Drew is a better polite comedian than Charles Hawtrey, and that both are inferior to Leo Ditrichstein who is inferior to Arnold Daly. I believe that the newspaper play reviewing in our larger cities is steadily becoming better: the change in the last three or four years is more than happy: for the first time in the history of American journalism is there now being displayed a cosmopolitan hospitality and freedom from parochialism. This, of course, is not yet generally true, but it is increasingly true. I admire the acting ability of Mary Garden, but I have not been able to detect symptoms of the histrionic genius

commonly attributed to Geraldine Farrar. I wish that Max Beerbohm would dramatize "Zuleika Dobson": it would be a difficult job, but I believe that Max could do it. I often wonder what became of an actress in Weedon Grossmith's local production of "Mr. Preedy and the Countess"; her name, looking back over the records, was Sheila Heseltine: she was a worse-than-bad actress, but an extraordinarily good-looking one.

I believe that the best uniform judgment of plays on the part of an American producer, taking one thing with another, has been displayed by Harrison Grey Fiske. I regard the Century Theatre, in New York, as the handsomest theatre in the world: next, the National Theatre, in Stockholm. Perhaps the ugliest theatre is the Raimundtheater, in Vienna. One of the most idiotic pieces of dramatic criticism that I have ever read is William Archer's criticism of Wedekind's "Pandora's Box." I consider Fritz Leiber, of Robert Mantell's company, one of the best actors on the American stage. The theory that Lantelme was a great beauty always amused me: she had a nose like the neck of a Curaçao bottle and a chin like a salmon's. I would rather read Tchekoff than see him acted. I consider Robert Edmond Jones the best of American scene designers, although he is, in the main, an imitator. Among the Italian dramatists, Giacosa and Rovetta

interest me more than the more eminent Martini and del Testa. I have a higher respect for the Irishman, Lennox Robinson, than for the Irishman, St. John Ervine. I was never able to pump up any enthusiasm for Stanley Houghton: he impressed me as a pale copy of Max Dreyer. I consider the men's washroom in the Casino Theatre badly in need of a good scrubbing.

I regard "Cæsar and Cleopatra" as the best of Shaw's plays, and "Widowers' Houses" as the worst. I have read all the dramatic criticism of Brander Matthews, and have found it uniformly hollow. I esteem Synge's "Riders to the Sea," Eugene O'Neill's "Moon of the Caribbees," Galsworthy's "The Mob," Marilynn Miller's kicking, Brieux's "Three Daughters of M. Dupont," Maeterlinck's gorgeous bluff, Stephen Phillips' "Herod," C. M. S. MacLellan's "The Shirkers," Barrie's "Peter Pan" and the low burlesque show called "The Girls from the Follies." I have always looked on the Dresden Royal Court Theatre as one of the three most interesting playhouses in Europe, though the Culmbacher and ham-and-cheese sandwiches sold in the corridor of the Königgrätzerstrasse-theater in Berlin during the *entr'-actes* are by no means to be sniffed at. One of the most humorous original devices I have ever seen was that imagined by Edward Ellis for his satirical Amer-

ican version of the little French play called "Le Sacrifice." I have never seen a good show at the Folies Bergère in Paris, nor at the Empire in London.

I consider Max Martersteig one of the most adroit stage directors on the Continent: he is, perhaps, second only to Reinhardt in the Central European theatre. Joe Smith, of the Avon Comedy Four, seems to me to be a very funny comedian. One of the worst things I have ever seen in this incarnation is Robert Mantell's King Lear. One of the best, Faversham's Iago. I have never lost my boyhood interest in magicians: Thurston today interests me just as much as Hermann used to: his manipulation of the so-called "spirit ball" trick enchants me almost as richly as Hofmannsthal's "Death and the Fool." I have no use for the Drama League: one cannot help the theatre by meeting in the Hotel Astor, eating chicken sandwiches, and listening to Walter Prichard Eaton, Clayton Hamilton and Louis Kaufman Anspacher make speeches.

§ 2

The Actor in Criticism.—Dramatic criticism advances as its concern with the actor recedes. Extended criticism of actors is a subterfuge for concealing a confined knowledge of drama. The dra-

matic opinions of the actor canonizer, George Henry Lewes, are admittedly as worthless as those of the actor lover, William Winter. The notion that drama is written solely to be acted, and that if it is not acted it is not drama but literature, is the notion that Shakespeare would not still be the greatest dramatist who ever lived had he never been played in a theatre.

The critic who treats of the history of the theatre in terms of its great actors is like the historian who treats of the world's wars in terms of their great generals. This is the superficial, the showy, the gilt and glitter melodrama method. The sober criticism is that which, while praising Wellington, does not confound him with the forces that actually inspired and impelled him to action. For where one Napoleon is the state within himself and indistinguishable from it, there are a hundred Ulysses Grants. For one Alexander, not—in the entire history of the theatre—a single actor. . . . The actor is essential to the performance of drama. Catgut is essential to the performance of music.

The autobiography of the average critic of the theatre has three chapters. He begins, a very young man fresh from the university and eager to conceal his youth, with a veneration for all the old, established actors. He devotes himself, by way of safe emulation of the respected fogies of his craft,

to impressive re-praisings, to high talk of "authority" and "flexibility," "sensitiveness" and "spiritual insight," to studious enthusiasms and obedient advocacies, with mayhap a pert touch of qualification here and there as if in tribute to his own independent wit and sagacity. He grows older and touches the thirties. The erstwhile subjects of his eulogy receive presently a more open-minded scrutiny, and while his gaze rests upon their varying proficiency it rests simultaneously, with a cynical squint, upon their warped complexions, bow-legs, absurd ex-officio antics and grill-room culture. And he forsakes now his cuckooing, cocks his cap at the man-of-the-world angle, pronounces a facetious curse upon tradition, and begins praising all the good-looking ingénues.

It is at this period of his career, perhaps, that he gets as close to absolute honesty and sound criticism as is ever his fortune. But honesty is inimical to his good standing among the professors. Criticism, in its common run, is a pose whereby one makes oneself important at the expense of the unimportant. And your critic, who comes to know this well, comes too to realize that the criticism which gains favour among the wise doodles is not that wherein gaunt honesty pitilessly exposes its intrinsic vulgarity and lack of dignity but that wherein politeness and a specious dignity are bred

from a carefully sophisticated honesty. So now your critic, with the years coming down upon him, gradually works back to safe first principles and begins again where he started.

No one appreciates the slyness of the cycle better than the actor himself, and none knows better how to toy delightfully and profitably with the critic at each of his several turns of faith. Thus we have a Mrs. Fiske pleasantly conferring over a volume of reminiscences with a young commentator but recently off the campus. Thus, at the other end, we have an Ada Rehan graciously inviting a gray-haired Winter to tea. And thus, in between, we have the ingénue Miss Chatterton—no whit less shrewd than her older sisters in her understanding of the whims of criticism—effectively making capital of her pretty youth by exercising its privilege to hold herself piquantly aloof. . . . "I can do nothing with the middle-aged critics," once observed the late Richard Mansfield. "But give me five minutes with a young one—or three with an old one—let me take his hand warmly in mine, and my reputation will be assured anew." "To please the venerable J. Ranken Towse," once observed the living Miss Julie Opp, "one must be old or English, and if one is both, so much the better."

More bosh has been written of actors and acting than of any other subject in the world. The actor,

at his best, is a proficient, likable and often charming translator into popularly intelligible terms of an imaginative artist's work. To argue that he is himself an artist is to corrupt the word artist with half-meanings. The actor is the illegitimate child of an art. He is born of the miscegenation of an art and a trade. His imagination can at the highest reach only the imagination of his dramatist; his power can reach only the limit of his dramatist's power; his emotion can flow only in the degree that his dramatist has turned on the faucet. If he is a good actor, he can serve his dramatist. But he can never be so good that he can improve upon his dramatist. I speak, obviously, only of dramatists who are artists. Almost any fairly competent actor can improve upon a hack playwright, but that does not make an actor an artist any more than a hack playwright like Leopold Lewis is made an artist by Irving's enhanced performance of the Mathias in his "The Bells."

Dramatic criticism in America is actor-ridden. Since the mass of this native criticism is emotional rather than reflective, this is not an unnatural nor illogical phenomenon. The emotional critic, which is to say the average American critic, naturally thinks not only in terms of emotion but in terms of the immediate instrument of that emotion. If he finds himself moved, he attributes that provocation

of feeling not to the absent dramatist—or if to the dramatist at all, then only in small part—but to the present instrument of the dramatist, the actor. He visualizes a drama not as a critic visualizes it, but as the yokel in the seat beside him visualizes it. We thus get enraptured gabble about "Forbes-Robertson's Hamlet" rather than Shakespeare's though, as any half-witted critic appreciates, Forbes-Robertson's Hamlet is doubtless the best Hamlet of our generation for the patent reason that Forbes-Robertson has the remarkable and even dumfounding intelligence to give us Shakespeare's Hamlet instead of E. H. Sothern's.

The English have sapped much of the life from their theatre by actor-worship. Our theatre is at the present time fresher than the British, and richer in vitality, and finer in promise. But we are going the way of the British. And for the same reason. Our most important newspapers are infected with actorcocci. Our periodicals, though in lesser degree, show the white patches near the tonsils. The thing assumes ridiculous, almost unbelievable, proportions. No actor is too humble, and none too lowly, to evoke the blubber atomizer. An obscure amateur actor in Stuart Walker's company is dosed with such extravagant praise that his head is turned to a degree that it becomes actually necessary to put him temporarily in an insane asylum. A talentless

actress in one of A. H. Wood's troupes is given a bath of journalistic stearine and demands that her salary be raised from one hundred dollars a week to four hundred and fifty instanter. A fourth-rate juvenile named Ladd is hymned a neo-Salvini on the pertinent ground that he served with the Army in France. A second-rate amuser, Godfrey Tearle, is greeted as a magnificent virtuoso because he comes from England. Ethel Barrymore, a competent and a charming actress, is proclaimed a great genius on the ground that she helped the Actors' Equity Association to win its fight against the managers. Wilton Lackaye, whose wit must vouchsafe him a good private laugh over it, is suddenly anointed a very great actor because he has disguised his naturally stern and forbidding features with a set of benevolent whiskers. A comely little flapper named Gillmore is greeted as a "breath-taking artist." And, by way of a grand set-piece, we have the subjoined spasm from the *Times* over the song and dance girl Elsie Janis:

"It seemed last night as though her light were shining as it had never shone before. When she danced her moonlight dance as in the old days at the Palace in London before the war, when she sang her moonlight song as a very young and very swank English aviator would sing it, when—above all—when she stood there in the uniform of a French chasseur and sang 'Madelon' with all the spirit in the world, well, these were great moments not

to be forgotten in a year of theatregoing. *All of which is solemnly reported by one who finds it difficult to keep from growing incoherent in the process."*

There, in this last sentence, you have it! Thus is the American theatrical criticism staggered, petrified, struck dumb with wonder and projected into a foaming fit by—a vaudeville performer.

§ 3

A Typical Case.—The local mummer worship got up full steam over the Hopkins production of Gorki's "Na Dnye," variously renamed "Night Lodging," "Night Refuge," "A Refuge for the Night," "The Lower Depths" and "A Night Shelter." Scarcely an actor in the troupe that didn't get his critical bunch of flowers. Several of the actors, true enough, gave meritorious performances, but "Na Dnye" is an actor-proof play. I have seen it played twice in Russia, three times in Germany, once in Switzerland, once in Irving Place and also by the Stage Society in London, and I have yet to see an actor fail in any of its rôles. These rôles, by the very nature of the dramatic composition, play themselves automatically. And, as a result, there has never—so far as I know—been a poor projection of the drama. The drama, indeed, is known in Europe as "the first of the Russian marionette

plays." The average American theatrical commentator, however, is always profoundly impressed by any actor who plays on a darkened stage. If the actor dies upon that darkened stage with much groaning and wheezing, so much the better. But if a death is not allotted to him by his dramatist, all that the performer need do to bring himself to be viewed as a very fine actor is to recite his lines in a low semi-quaver.

Of "Night Lodging" it is something in the way of a waste of time to write at this late hour. All that one has to say of the play, one has already said a score of times. One of the important pieces of dramatic composition of the modern theatre, the second play of him who has been aptly described as the proletarian of the Russian cities, as opposed to Tolstoi, the peasant aristocrat, a play that in its day has influenced a drama in revolt, it belongs in this day to what may be called the Cook's Tour drama. The drama, that is, that is theatrically interesting chiefly to those who like to travel by rote to the inspection of the tombs, the mausoleums and the graves of the great. For myself, I find the play in the contemporary theatre a decided bore. But to argue, as the Rialto hazlittry has characteristically argued, that because the play is now a decided theatrical bore it is therefore a dull and desertless play is to argue that because a horse-hair sofa is no longer re-

garded as an acceptable or comfortable article of furniture it therefore can no longer be sat upon, and is no sofa.

§ 4

Sir Arthur and the Ladies of the Round Table.—Of all the conspicuous writing men of our time, probably none—for all that has been whispered in awe to the contrary—has understood women so feebly and drawn more absurd characters than the dramatist Pinero. The Pinero woman—Iris Bellamy, Paula Tanqueray, Mrs. Ebbsmith, Letty Shell, Zoë Blundell, the young Mrs. Renshaw, or any other such painted seriously—is woman as she is viewed by Bertha M. Clay and the Yale sophomores: a lovely display of fireworks with the band playing Bach's Grand Mass in B Minor. From first to last, rarely does one of these seriously presented portraits reveal a flash of observation or penetration above the third melodramatic grade. Taken in bulk, they are merely so many suave Laura Jean Libbeys, so many stock company actresses dramatized, so many puppets of the family story paper manipulated by a man who adeptly conceals his ignorance of women in his knowledge of English composition. Pinero, at bottom, is a cynical sentimentalist; and a cynical sentimentalist is one of

God's drollest toys. A fine dramaturgist, Sir Arthur remains to the end of his days, save in a few frank farces, a distinctly second-rate dramatist.

§ 5

Again.—It is not the fact that Arthur Schnitzler acutely understands women that makes his plays so unusually interesting, but the fact that he acutely understands his fellow man's understanding of women. In this difference lies at once the secret of the humour and the secret of the pathos of the very talented doctor's writings.

§ 6

The Coming of the Censor.—To anyone with half an eye it becomes evident that a censorship of the American stage, akin to the British, is close upon us. Not long ago, indeed, the cornerstone was laid at a national conference in New York of license commissioners, police commissioners and directors of public safety herded together from various parts of the country. That, in a nation which already, either as whole or in part, holds it immoral and illegal to play a game of solitaire on a railway train, to drink a bit of sherry, to exhibit a painting of Felicien Rops, to read "Lysistrata," to throw a

leather ball on a Sunday, to wear a stuffed bird on a bonnet and to have dinner with one's mother-in-law in a private dining-room—that in such a nation a stage censorship should have been deferred so long as this is surely a matter for wonder. That a nation of this high cultural sensitiveness should consider it subversive of the public morality to publish the discreetly related amours of a Jurgen or Doris and yet pass without so much as a lift of the eyelash the stage presentation of divers "Please Get Marrieds" with their bald boudoir peep-shows has long been as difficult of understanding as that a national metropolis which regards it immoral and illegal to ride through its principal park in a taxi-cab with the blinds drawn fails to regard it immoral and illegal to strip a woman on the stage down to within an inch of her omphalos.

To most of us, of course, there is approximately the same measure of immorality in the stage spectacle of a peeled female as there is, say, in "The 'Genius' " or a glass of beer, but it is another thing to reconcile, on the part of our professional arbiters of art, life and letters, the indifference to the one and the horror at the latter. That, however, straws are blowing in the wind has long since been unmistakable. For already by but curiously intermittent ukase have bare legs been sheathed in the Winter Garden, have Edward Knoblauch, Paul Pot-

ter, et al., been operated upon, has the hooch been removed from hoochie-coochie on burlesque stages. And hence not less unmistakable is the rapid approach of the day when—as in England at the present time—Tolstoi's renamed "Redemption" may not be presented under that title on the ground that the title may be taken as reflecting upon the Lord Jesus Christ!

What will this censorship and its chief surgeons be like? It is reasonably safe to assume that this power of censorship will be vested, in so far as New York is concerned, in a committee somewhat smaller than the current Mayor's Committee, the present semi-official blue pencil. This smaller body—it will in all probability contain three members—will, if the present relevant statistics count for anything, be composed of (1) some amiable old dodo from Brooklyn whose luncheon consists of a bar of milk chocolate, (2) some obstreperous pulpit jackass whose nose is constantly smelling for easy notoriety, and (3) some perfectly ignorant, if perfectly honest, police official of a bacteriological rather than an artistic culture. On some such triumvirate as this will the business of stage censorship devolve. And with the obvious result that the triumvirate in question will, like the average dramatic critic, concern itself vastly less with reporting the impression that this or that play makes upon it

than with the impression that it makes on this or that play.

What will follow will be a rich shambles. All the idiocies of the current motion picture censorship will be repeated in the instance of theatrical entertainment. It will become promptly unlawful for murder to be shown upon the stage, thus doing away with such pernicious drama as Shakespeare's; for forgery, thus doing away with the debasing drama of Ibsen; for drinking, so banning such lewd spectacles as Gorki's and Bernard Shaw's; for illicit love, thus excommunicating the obscene Schnitzler; for thievery, thus bouncing the evil Hauptmann; for sacrilege, so shooing out Andreyev and Brieux; and for contempt of the courts, thus cashiering Galsworthy. It will doubtless become unlawful as well to exhibit the female leg above the kneecap and the female bosom below the Adam's apple. It will suddenly become inimical to public morality to intimate that the bed is ever a coeducational institution. And an official premium will be placed upon all the uplift slops wherein life is pictured as a Y. M. C. A. and love as a Maltese mewing.

Intelligent censorship would be, in the American theatre, a welcome thing. Give us a censorship committee composed of such fellows as Huneker, James Branch Cabell and Parker of the Boston *Transcript*—or one composed, say, of Francis

Hackett, Barrett Clark and Philip Littell—and the quality of the American stage would be as rapidly bettered as if three-quarters of our current American playwrights, producers and actors were given adequate doses of bichloride of mercury. A censorship that would rid the stage of the dangerous immorality of the junk that presently besmears it, a censorship that would instantly give the gate to a play that was cheaply imagined and badly written, a censorship that would regard as inimical to the public welfare the kind of exhibit in which the $150,000 mortgage on the farm is lifted through a belief in God—such a censorship would surely be a fetching one. But any censorship that directs itself toward a protection of the ignorant, that holds the virtue of Sophie Bingbaum, a Gimbel package wrapper, a matter of greater importance than the artistic integrity of Edmond Rostand, that believes the sight of a silk stocking is sufficient to send Mr. John Corbin straight to hell—any such censorship is as profound a parody as are the novels of Dorothy Richardson. . . . Here, of course, I am guilty of setting forth pretty ripe platitudes but—set a platitude to catch a platitude.

The gestures of the coming censorship may easily be anticipated. In the first place, the censors, believing that such things as strip tights and bare legs are of a high cantharidian power, will forth-

with descend upon our music show producers and summon them, under threat of heavy penalty, immediately to put their girls in long skirts and stockings. This is always the initial whang, and clearly illustrative of the censors' obtuseness. Nothing in the world is so utterly non-cantharidian as these same strip tights and these same bare legs. And nothing, by the same mark, so greatly the reverse as that very thing upon which the censors will blockheadedly insist. The most moral spectacle this side of Oberammergau is a burlesque show like Billy Watson's or Al Reeves', with the girls encased in flesh-coloured sausage skins that show up every bump, bulb and bone. In such a case, nothing is left to the imagination—not even the girl. The effect, therefore, even upon the button-hole makers and sailors who attend these exhibitions, is as thoroughly moral as that of one of Old Dr. Grindle's wax Louvres.

This holds equally true on the higher plane of the music show stage. For one Johnnie who is to be observed waiting at the stage door for a classic dancer, you will find two dozen waiting for one of the chorus girls in the "Fashionable Finishing School" number. The long skirt, the lingerie and the silk stocking, swished at the youth of the nation from a brilliantly lighted, highly coloured platform, are the real trouble makers. A "Follies"

dancer swathed in piquing silks and laces is of ten times greater horse power in pulling a college boy from his moorings than some such very nearly nude dancer as La Sylphe in "The Scandals of 1920." Who, indeed, since the Civil War has ever heard any one protest against the strip tight clad trapeze ladies and bareback riders in the circuses? A shrewd body of censors, a body composed of men of sharp understanding, would seek, therefore, not to cover up nudity, but would insist upon exposing it. Nothing would so quickly improve the morality of the theatregoing public as a summary censorship order to the Shuberts immediately to bare all the legs in the Winter Garden up to the hips and to Ziegfeld forthwith to strip off his girls' immoral frocks completely.

Turning to dramatic entertainment, we will find the censors condemning all such plays as "Androcles" on the ground of irreligion and approving of all such as "Ben Hur" on the ground of religious uplift. Yet what are the facts? The facts are that such a play as "Androcles" is actually the religious uplift play and that such a one as "Ben Hur" is actually the irreligious play. The good Christian, sitting before a play like "Androcles," finds his faith strengthened by Shaw's poking fun at it. He finds himself at first perhaps indignant, then challenged and on guard, then pitting his own argu-

ments against the stage arguments projected against him, then triumphing over the latter if not by logic at least by the sheer stubborn power of his picadored belief, trust and faith. (No one comprehends this subtle hokum better than such a wag as Shaw.) And thus the viewer of a play like "Androcles" finds his faith anew as one ever finds one's strength when that strength is offered defiance.

But in the case of a play like "Ben Hur," the good Christian leaves the theatre much as he entered it. His faith is not strengthened in the least; it is not left even as strong as it was before. And why? Very simply and very obviously because nothing is strengthened save by trial and because without such test and trial, as by inactivity ever, there inevitably follow flabbiness, weakness and—eventually—a more or less complete debility. What doesn't uplift, depresses. If the world's clergy were for the next year of Sundays to preach the doctrine of Christian *laissez faire,* the churches would at the end of that time be wholly deserted and converted into jazz parlours, skating rinks and bachelor apartments. What keeps the churches alive is the clergy's constant challenging of its flock, its constant reply to doubt, its constant militancy.

A sagacious censorship would have keen perception of this, as it would of the equally general and

misreckoned attitudes of censorship toward the theatrical exhibition of adultery, murder and the other sins and crimes of the body politic. To prohibit adultery in the drama on the theory that it is corruptive of the public morality is the last word in absurdity. The theory that the exhibition of adultery in such a play as "The King" inspires the theatregoer to the commission of adultery is quite as sensible as the theory that the exhibition of suicide by jumping out of the window in such a play as "Mid-Channel" inspires the theatregoer to the commission of suicide by jumping out of the window. The notion that because a man or woman sees adultery pictured pleasantly upon the stage he or she will become personally hospitable to adultery is further akin to the notion that because a man or woman sees murder pictured pleasantly on the stage (as, for example, in "Kismet") he or she will suffer a desire to go right out and drown someone.

The more pleasantly a thing is pictured in the theatre, the less pleasant and convincing it seems to the audience. This appears at first glance to be a mere strain for paradox, but it is nothing of the kind. The boomerang of contrasting values has long been understood by the theatrical psychologist. The noble line "Rags are royal raiment when worn for virtue's sake"—a stunning jakefetcher—has long since provoked a low derisive

roar. "Ten Nights in a Barroom" would today, even in a nation whose great majority believes in its uplifting thesis, be hooted off the stage by an audience soever anæsthetic to its ridiculous literary quality. But these are examples perhaps somewhat outdated and far afield. Let us come down to the moment. A protracted, rapturous and blissful kiss provokes an audience to the labial manufacture of quizzical smacking noises. Neri, the blissful glorier in lust and blood, makes an audience snicker. (Yet, though the intent of "The Jest" text is the opposite, the play is a popular success. This, relevantly, is usually and naturally the case.) It is not the pleasantly pictured thievery in "Turn To the Right" that strikes the audience pleasantly, but the honourable impulse behind that thievery. "Romeo and Juliet," the most enthralling love story ever told, is ever remembered by a theatrical audience less for its glamorously projected love than for its tragedy. Contrariwise, the overpowering grief of Maurya provokes a warm glow, as does the tragic end of Toni Weber. The pleasantly pictured and happy adultery of Trenwith and Iris makes an audience feel "sad." The sweeping happiness of Hauptmann's Ottegebe in her loving resolve to sacrifice herself for Heinrich repels a theatre audience. Nothing could be more pleasant than carnal sin as it is set forth in

such a play as Capus' "Wounded Bird," yet nothing could impress an American audience as less pleasant. Nothing could be more pleasant than sin as it is pictured by Magda and the Countess Beata, yet the persuasion of the theatre audience is negligible. And nothing, on the other hand, could seem more charming to an Anglo-Saxon audience than the unpleasantly pictured vice of a Rita Cavallini and her early Beppo in some such great box office instrument as Edward Sheldon's "Romance."

All such values our coming censorship—as all censorship—will distort and confound. The day that it is instituted, parents had best keep a sharp eye on their young sons and daughters!

§ 7

The Mystery Play.—I affect no impressive air of superiority as to the so-called mystery or detective story or play—one like "The Thirteenth Chair" diverts me occasionally in the same way as a sentimental little piece of writing like "The Romantic Journeys of Grandma" or "Little Girl"—but the thing has to be theatrically very well manœuvered or, even before the detective begins sniffing the parlour for the incriminating Flor de Cuba butt, I am already home and in bed. Lightly

to amuse me, a mystery play must be a play first and a mystery second. Chesterton's "Magic" illustrates fairly well—if not too relevantly—what I mean. The element of mystery here serves the author merely as the slapstick serves Shaw: a compromise device wherewith hopefully to augment the guaranteed comparatively small and comparatively intelligent clientele with a sufficient number of hooligans to make the enterprise pay. But since the Chestertons and Shaws do not write detective plays for the popular theatre, one has to be content with the dark meat.

The author of the average mystery or detective play designed for popular consumption works up his mystery with so assiduous a corkscrew, so much forearm work and so many grunts that by the time he is half-way through with his job one begins to amuse oneself less by watching the circumvolutions of the plot than by looking, as it were, through the plot and watching the attendant heartrending perspirations of the author. There, in the background, behind the popguns, corpses, ruined women and Irish bloodhounds, is the poor soul discerned gallumphing madly hither and thither with his salt shaker and veil, desperately shaking the former upon the tail of every character who by no human process of logic could conceivably have potted the

deceased and painstakingly draping the latter over the one and only person on the platform who might reasonably be suspected of having done the deed. Stripped to the buff and steaming like a stoker, one observes him furiously pulling wires, mislaying revolvers, ringing telephones, banging on doors, yelling "Hell," trotting out detectives, tweaking their noses, killing seducers, shooting off suspicions over both shoulders, casting foul stains upon virgins' honour, hiding murderers behind rocks and trees, pushing office buttons and lowering and raising lights in the attempt to inject a baffling mystery into a fable that is intrinsically about as baffling and mysterious as a glass of Pilsner.

§ 8

The Critical Root.—At the root of all criticism there is always discoverable either envy or disgust. From the hands into which envy falls, there emanate the transparent and betraying "But in fairness to's," "In justice it should be admitted's," "However's," "But it would be hardly fair to's" and "But then's." From the hands into which disgust falls, there blooms the authentic flower. The worst of criticism is the bloom of envy; the best is the bloom of an irrepressible disgust.

§ 9

On an Actress' Charm.—An actress is charming on the stage in the degree that her audience imagines she is charming off the stage.

§ 10

The Literary Drama.—It is jocosely related of Professor George Pierce Baker, the Harvard J. Berg Esenwein, that on his frequent visits in New York with his theatrical acquaintances he is so eager to have himself regarded as "one of the boys" that his elaborate conversational indulgence in the Rialto stage lingo makes it almost impossible for them to understand him. And it is a well-known fact that Professor Brander Matthews, the Columbia Lotta, is similarly so eager to pass himself off as anything but a college professor that his assiduity in expounding the "show business" at the expense of the drama of literary splendour amounts almost to a form of insanity. It is ever the nature of the leopard to wish to change his spots. Ludwig Uhrgehäuse, son of old Herman Uhrgehäuse, the horseradish importer, thus becomes Llewellyn Urquhart, corresponding secretary of the New Rochelle Vigilantes; the aspiring coloured girl becomes Mr. Mennen's best customer; and Professor

Richard Burton, the University of Minnesota *table d'hôte* æsthete, as head of the Drama League endorses George M. Cohan.

The popular suspicion of the so-called literary drama and the public disrepute into which it has been brought in America are attributable not, as is commonly held, to the college professor who is a college professor, but to the college professor who, for all his being ineradicably a college professor by blood and instinct, seeks to mask himself in other, and perhaps more worldly, guises. The former, as I have met with and known him, is a postureless, likable, well-schooled and often anything but unimaginative man: his opinions of the theatre and drama are interesting and worth listening to. A number of such fellows—Allard of Harvard, Lewisohn of Ohio State, White of Cornell, Nettleton of Yale, Gayley of California, to name a few—are at once reserved and aloof scholars to whom the theatre and drama are an adventure in scholarship. But for every such man, for every such dignified student and interpreter of the drama, there are a dozen vainglorious and impracticable bladders who scurry to every McAlpin Hotel, Biltmore and Keen's Chop House banquet, to every side-street reception to a foreign celebrity and to every periodic free lettuce sandwich by way of exhibiting their persons and their

notions to the gaze of cosmopolis. It is this type of college professor, thirsting for publicity and itching to have himself accepted as a mundane and practical-minded fellow, who intermittently shoots off strained hors d'oeuvres eulogies of Willard Mack, together with such dessert philosophies as "the best play is the play that appeals to the greatest number of people" and "immediate success is the proper aim of the playwright in any age." It is this type of college professor who, prancing in the pages of the periodicals and newspaper literary supplements, contributes to the idiocy of impressionable readers and assists in lowering the standards of the theatre against the theatre's will.

The newspaper play reviewers, realizing perhaps—and accurately—that one of the easiest ways to gain a scholarly reputation is to praise scholarly things, are ever extravagantly hospitable to the so-called literary drama. Let Gorki or Tolstoi, Maeterlinck or Stephen Phillips bore them into a state approximating coma, yet will they regularly trot out the faithful "admitted masterpiece that everyone who loves the theatre must see" stencil. The commercial manager—if perhaps only in the spirit of the little boy who after cabbaging a penny out of his mother's pocketbook guiltily sneaks up behind her and startles her with an unexpected and somewhat puzzling kiss—yet intersperses his Cosmo

Hamiltons with Masefield, his Augustus Thomases with Shaw, and his Samuel Shipmans with Drinkwater. And the public, for all the slings and arrows poised at it, gives its lucrative patronage to a just and fair share of St. John Ervines, Sem Benellis, Eugene O'Neills, John Drinkwaters, John Galsworthys and J. M. Synges. These, in any debasing of the standards of the theatre, are not to blame. That blame is rather the portion of the very men to whom one might—did one not know them—rightly look for an ardent championship of all that is fine and noble in literature, and of all that is fine and noble in the theatre. Yet these are the very men who—by virtue of their cheap pushings toward self-exploitation—currently work a greater critical damage to the art of drama and to the art of the theatre than any other existing force.

There is scarcely a college in the land that doesn't boast at least one such intellectual Bim the Button Man. The portrait of this professorial Bim is immediately recognizable. Very often, he is found to be a man of some taste and considerable learning. Very often, he is found to be a man who, until the avidity for banquet and lecture invitations and publicity besieges him, has conducted himself and his opinions in a sane and bracing manner. But the first time he sinks a tooth into a public lamb chop, or takes his stand in front of a

dozen camp-stools filled with St. Louis brewers' wives, Urbana school-teachers and suburban Stanislavskis, or gets a letter from the editor of the *New York Times* literary supplement asking him to review a book by Bernard Shaw or Gordon Craig, he is a goner. He appreciates—and correctly—that to say what his audience expects him to say—that is, to uphold, with scholarly reserve, the dignity of art and letters—will make him the cynosure of all snores. He appreciates—and correctly—that if he is to bring himself out of the obscurity of his class-room walls even temporarily, he must inject into himself a rich complement of O. Henry surprise coda-kicks. He appreciates, in a word, that a college professor who acts like a college professor in public is as dead an attraction as "Paul Kauvar." So what does he do?

He does what is as plain as the nose on your face. He throws back his ears, wiggles them, slashes about him with his tail, and conducts himself generally as little like a college professor as is humanly possible for him. He chokes back Racine and, in a voice that frightens the waiters, boldly announces to the surrounding nesselrode pudding eaters that Sammie Shipman is on the Right Track. He tucks Oscar Wilde securely away in the corner of his brain and, in tones that set the Egyptian onyx earrings of the St. Louis brewers' wives trembling,

proclaims that Shakespeare never wrote without his eye on the box-office and was just as good a showman as Jake Shubert. He swallows his honest belief as not sufficiently newsy and, in an article three columns long, proves that Gordon Craig is the inferior of Unitt and Wickes, Clara Tice and the Baroness De Meyer. . . .

These monkeyshines he does not negotiate merely for what little money there may be in them. It is notoriety that he primarily seeks, for notoriety is the blood of life to him. To it, he will sacrifice anything. He wants to be known to the outside world; he must be known to the outside world. To live and die known only to the yearly few hundred Grand Street seekers for knowledge on Corneille and Goldoni, that would be unbearable! To live and die with only an occasional paper on "The Recrudescence of the Proletarian Æsthetic in the French Drama of the Seventeenth Century" in *Harper's Magazine*, how sour a fate! To live and die regarded by the jolly outside world as a mere scholar, as a man whose blood is gray, as a fellow who honestly prefers Congreve and Wycherley to Conroy and Le Maire and Molière to Mollie King, what would the wife's sister think! . . . And thus Sigmund, in Vienna, chalks up another name.

But enough of this. What of the deprecated literary drama itself? No subject of the theatre is

burdened with more sophistries and beset by more buncombes. Due very largely to the Bim gas, a large portion of the public has been persuaded to believe that any drama written by a literary man is "literary drama" and that only such dramas as are written by men who began life as stock company actors and developed their writing careers by composing vaudeville sketches in which Gus, the plumber, arriving at the height of a fashionable reception, is mistaken by the hostess for Lord Algernon Chichester, the owner of Rosebush, the Derby winner, are the Real Thing. The result is that the susceptible public, somewhat against its natural impulse—since it is ever attracted by "names," and since literary men more often have these "names"—is frightened away from such excellent shows as are provided by so-called literary drama like Chesterton's "Magic" and is steered instead toward such tedious shows as are provided by simon-pure showshop drama like Hartley Manners' "One Night in Rome." Yet the former, even with second-rate casting, is from any standpoint a much better Broadway show than the latter, with first-rate casting.

Good drama, of whatever nature, is good literature. Good literature, in the majority of relevant cases, is good drama. The theory that in order to make good literature theatrically dramatic it is

necessary to treat it with the cathartics of Mr. Owen Davis is the theory that in order to convert good drama into literature it is necessary to treat it with the sedatives of Mr. William De Morgan. Arnold Bennett's "Sacred and Profane Love" is poor drama not because Mr. Bennett is a literary man but because, in this instance, he is a dramatist. The purely literary passages in the play—as, for example, the admirably written seduction episode in the first act—are vital, forceful, deeply moving drama. The purely dramatic passages in the play—as, for example, the morphine fiend, horse-pistol rough-house in the third act—are absurd, titterful, without effect. Hamlet's soliloquy—literature pure and simple—is twenty times as dynamic in drama as all the long third-act sheer theatre speeches of all the Kaintucks in all the "Palmy Days" that all the Augustus Thomases have ever brewed.

It has been written of Arnold Bennett—as it is always written of a literary man when he enters the theatre—that his play would have been a better play (the adjective is used in the critical, rather than the commercial, sense) had he possessed, in addition to his skill as a man of letters, the skill of a practised play-maker. Assuming that such criticism is composed for the information of persons above the intellectual and emotional grade of morons, what could be more imbecile? Bennett

has a set of characters, each developed as he elects. He has a fable. He has the settings for those characters and that fable. He has his embellishment of mild philosophy, mild reflection and mild humour. The whole he presents for what its separate and combined ingredients are worth. If, presented as he presents it, it interests his audience, good. If, presented as he presents it, it fails to interest his audience, not so good. But what could be more silly than to urge that he might have more greatly interested an intelligent audience that is at present conceivably not greatly interested if he had conducted his simple fable, for the benefit of that intelligent audience, more in accordance with Sardou and Pinero jumping-jack principles?

Bennett's play is a poor play because it is builded of what are intrinsically Hall Caine materials. For that reason, it doesn't interest the more sophisticated spectator. The notion that this spectator would, however, be very much interested in the same play if it had been written with the technical skill of a Charles Klein is something like the notion that the philosophical ratiocinations of Dr. Frank Crane might be made highly appealing to an intelligent person if only they were set forth in the more graceful, plausible and ingratiating style of James Branch Cabell. . . . If, further and irrelevantly, the phrase "better play" has in mind

the box-office, the criticism is not less idiotic. The Bennett play, at the time this was written, was playing to a weekly box-office of more than sixteen thousand dollars.

The bad literary drama is not primarily bad drama, but bad literature. The belief that Percy Mackaye, say, is a literary man who writes literary drama is not without its humours. Mr. Mackaye is not a literary man, nor does he write literary drama. He is a man with all the manner of the literary man and all the talent of the third-rate German demi-poets like Fuhrmann, Stucken and Victor Hahn who would seem to believe that the literary and poetic drama is a form of drama suited only to a new-fangled kind of theatre building with its stage where its lavatories ought to be, and vice versa, or to any cow-pasture or bush league baseball lot temporarily metamorphosed into an ancient Athenian grove by setting up half a dozen Chinese lanterns, two French flags, several pots of red-fire, some rubber-plants and a border of James G. Blaine campaign torches. In the exercise of literature and literary achievement, Mr. Mackaye, if he may be said to stand not exactly next to the stove in the rear of the room, yet surely may be said to stand near enough to feel the heat upon his Little Henri. No man in America has postured more as a figure in letters, and no man has produced less

literature. No man has more magically, the moment he has taken it in hand, transformed a pen into an auger. He is the greatest bore that American letters has produced. And the notion that his high-school hallelujahs constitute anything even remotely describable as literary drama is akin to the contention that they constitute literature in the first place.

Literary drama—if the phrase must be used—is simply drama that is written, as opposed, in the case of other drama, to drama that is carpentered. The two may, indeed, be one and the same, as in the instance of St. John Ervine's excellent "Jane Clegg," or Galsworthy's "Justice," or Dunsany's "Gods of the Mountain"—or, to descend quite a few flights, Booth Tarkington's "Clarence." The phrase literary drama is more often than not mere yokel tautology, like full dress suit, high silk hat or champagne wine. If a play is a first-rate play, it is literature, though it do a business of $18,000 a week and be written by a man who hasn't had an essay or a poem or a novel to his credit. George Ade's "College Widow" is every bit as much literary drama as Maeterlinck's "The Betrothal," and a devil of a lot more. Edward Knoblauch's "Faun" and "Kismet" are literary drama even as Stephen Phillips' "Herod" or Synge's "Playboy." Indeed, I am not at all sure

that Avery Hopwood's good laugh show, "Our Little Wife," and Montague Glass' Potash and Perlmutter belly-shakers are not also literary drama.

I have never been able to suppress the conviction that the worst play that a lay theatre person like Willa Sibert Cather might write would not be a very much better play than the best play a practised theatrical technician like Augustus Thomas might write. George Birmingham, knowing utterly nothing of the accepted rigmarole of the stage, wrote, in his maiden "General John Regan," a vastly finer play than the expert Henry Arthur Jones wrote in his entire lifetime. When the talented literary man writes a poor play it is less because he doesn't know how to write a play than because the materials out of which he essays to write that play are, even in the hands of an experienced dramatist, inaptly suited to the theatre. It is as absurd to suppose that any sort of material may be made adroitly and conveniently to fit the form of the theatre as to suppose that any sort of material may be made adroitly and conveniently to fit the form of lyric verse. Let Sardou have tried to make a theatre play out of the story of Cassiopeia, or Pinero to have dramatized the Martian tales of H. G. Wells!

The so-called "literary drama," in short, is a bugaboo used by the professorial Bims and the pro-

ducers of torso shows to scare adult children. And when these droll ones use the designation they are very careful always to employ it with reference to some much admittedly lugubrious dingus as Percy Mackaye's "Bird Masque," which is neither literature nor drama, and equally careful always to withhold it from some such admittedly rollicking dish as Shaw's "Caesar and Cleopatra," which is both.

§ 11

The American Librettist.—The American musical comedy stage has, in Victor Herbert, as accomplished a light composer and, in Jerome Kern, as dexterous a paraphraser, as one may find this side of the Kärntner-Ring. It has, in Ziegfeld, the foremost producer in this especial field that the theatre of the day knows. It has, in such pantaloons as George Bickel, De Wolf Hopper, Harry Watson, Al Jolson and Raymond Hitchcock, a superior brand of comedians. It has in such virgins as Annette Bade, Martha Mansfield, Marilynn Miller, Adele Astaire, Kathleen Ardelle and the like, at least as plausible a quorum of young women as one will encounter anywhere on the Continent. It has, in theatres like the New Amsterdam, as gorgeous playhouses for its exposition as any world capital can boast. It has all these things. And it has also

the cheapest, trashiest and most incompetent librettos that the civilized theatre has thus far in its career listened to.

The libretto is the one thing that keeps the American musical comedy, or music show, from its undisputed place in the forefront of the modern tune stage. Manufactured in the main either by outright hacks or by once clever men who have long since grown stale, it is generally revealed as a lazy compendium of venerable almanac wheezes on the B. & O. Railroad, the Albany night boat, the dill pickle, Brooklyn and matrimony. The originality that was brought to its manufacture in the early nineties by the then fresh Harry B. Smith and by the witty C. M. S. MacLellan is long since a thing of the past. Third-rate farces are today revamped and palmed off as sprightly librettos. A trio of old so-called "nigger acts" are strung together by having a girl in tights (programmed as Folly) escort an actor in long white whiskers (programmed as Time) through a series of elaborate Urban sets. Such standbys of our childhood as "Jane" are embroidered with references to woman suffrage, the shimmy dance and Pussyfoot Johnson and are set forth as new and up-to-date "books." Old Palais Royal door-belabourers, already deodorized of all reason by the London piffle doctors, are imported, localized by injecting into them snappy

allusions to Mrs. Winslow's Soothing Syrup, Lydia Pinkham and B. V. D.'s, and sprung upon the public as rapid and racy stuff. And year by year the quality of the American libretto so becomes poorer and poorer, until very soon—if not, indeed, already—it must take its place as a humorous literary product with the funny column of the *Methodist Bugle.*

But, argue the producers, the public no longer cares about a libretto one way or the other. Give the public the right kind of syncopations, a lot of pretty legs, some good-looking costumes, and maybe a joke or two about Congress and Pottstown, Pa., and the public is richly satisfied. Does the public want a logical and witty book? they ask. And they reply to themselves fortissimo with a very convincing no. And, by the way of giving themselves the necessary proofs, they point out to themselves the enormous success of such simon-pure girl-scene-and-leg shows as "The Follies" and "The Scandals." And who shall deny them the truth of what they say? But, alas, the eminent gentlemen go only half way. To argue, as they argue, that because "The Follies" and "The Scandals" are enormous successes without librettos, the public doesn't care for or want librettos, is to argue that because Isadora Duncan, Maude Allan and Ruth St. Denis are great successes without underdrawers, the bulk

of the female public therefore no longer cares for underdrawers. The truth is that whenever a producer provides the public with a libretto that can be listened to without serious inflammation of the tympanic membrane, the public is overjoyed. As witness, for example, the case of Rip's "As You Were."

More and more, the librettists who contribute to the witlessness of our music show stage appear to become convinced of their inability to pitch their salt higher than a joke on Hoboken or the Subway, and to seek with a clumsy facetiousness to conceal their shortcomings. Commissioned by a producer to prepare the book for a music show, and aware that to attempt to write such a book would be a doleful giveaway, they indulge by manner of self-protection in all sorts of laboured and painfully obvious flim-flam. This flim-flam, patterned amateurishly after the droll irony made familiar by George M. Cohan some years ago both in his librettos and in the farces which he wrote or rewrote, presently takes the form of a heavy jocularity at the librettist's own expense, a self-spoofing designed to forestall criticism. Though, true enough, the dodge contrives generally to bamboozle the Rialto connoisseurs, it is beginning to offer an ascending testimony to the fact that the American librettist is rapidly rivaling the British as a chambermaid of the sour.

Such a music show as "The Greenwich Village Follies"—almost any music show like the "Scandals" or the "Gaieties" will serve quite as well—illustrates clearly the ubiquitous wile. The librettist, getting his contract for the job and being informed by the producer in a general way of the "artists" who will have to be supplied with material, promptly removes his coat, inserts a Fatima, and proceeds to try to execute the desired number of sharp burlesque and satirical scenes. In due time, after much scalp scratching, he succeeds brilliantly in satirizing some such thing as Prohibition by very cleverly naming the chorus girls after the different soft drinks and probably even in burlesquing the omnipresent court-room drama by causing the judge to cry out "Order in the court-room!" and bringing the prosecuting attorney epigrammatically to rejoin, "I'll have a highball." But, though so far so good, he now finds himself confounded. What to do? He has succeeded magnificently thus far, but thus far is patently not far enough. He removes his waistcoat, sheathes another Fatima, and has at the job again. For his stinging but mayhap not sufficiently developed Prohibition satire he now fashions an apophthegm on Bevo and hits upon the further happy notion of dressing up one of the chorus boys to look like William Jennings Bryan. And for his

humorously biting court-room drama burlesque he evolves a subtle and timely lampoon in the shape of a juryman who bends so far over to get a slant at the exposed calf of the soubrette playing the plaintiff that he falls out of the jury box. But even this, excellent as it is, the librettist finds scarcely sufficient for a full evening's entertainment; and he removes now his chemise, imbeds another Fatima, and is once more off. Further inspiration, however, he finds lacking. Alas, one cannot push inspiration too far! And soon it dawns upon him sadly that he will have to lay his admirable half-finished Prohibition satire and his equally admirable half-finished court-room drama burlesque aside—forsooth, have not such as Swift and Sterne, too, had to lay aside temporarily their "Gullivers" and "Sentimental Journeys" until fancy came to them again?—and, laying them aside, take another tack.

But what tack to take? Aye, there's the rub! There ain't no tack. A librettist brought up to write Prohibition satires in which a chorus girl named Grape Juice brandishes a sword labelled "Eighteenth Amendment" and chases another chorus girl named Rum back into the wings, and court-room drama burlesques in which the burlesque consists chiefly in the district attorney's being led to imagine, from a ratchet in the hands of the

trap-drummer, that his trousers have ripped, such a librettist—once his old standbys have been taken from him—is as completely at sea as a Canary Island. But being at sea doesn't buy yellow chamois gloves, green velour hats with little feathers on the sides, and Fatimas. And there is need for hocus-pocus. And it is this hocus-pocus, this substitute for invention and imagination, for even a second-rate skill—a substitute as transparent as a Red Raven split—that is every other night dished out as libretto to the native music show audience.

In a "Greenwich Village Follies," for example, the librettist (modeling weakly after the old Cohan revue formula) resorts to the now long stale and manifest evasion of having one character stop suddenly toward the conclusion of the show and ask what has become of the libretto, and of bringing another character then with a five-ton facetiousness to remark that it was so poor that the manager decided at the last moment not to produce it. In a "Gaieties," the librettist—unable to think up anything better than having the portrait of a girl come to life during the leading man's dream and then causing the leading man to follow the "dream girl" through a dozen or more scenes to gay Paree—seeks to cover up his inspirational doldrums by putting in a prologue wherein he wheezishly trots out a decrepit old man with long white whiskers, calls

him Mr. Plot and observes that he has been doing service in the music shows of this particular management for more than twenty-five years and seems to be still at it.

And thus it goes, evening after evening. A "Follies" with its peculiarly apt and seasonable bull-fight burlesque wherein the comedian figged out as a toreador observes jocosely that he is a champion when it comes to "throwing the bull"; a "Scandals" with its curtain lifting on a scene showing a three-mile-limit saloon off New York and then disclosing by way of satire a comedian dressed up as a waiter who stumbles with a tray of glasses; and the other shows with their lubberly shifts and guiles in concealing their librettists' unfitness for their tasks—how forlornly they stand at Battery Park, how wistfully they look out over the seas, how eagerly they crook their fingers to the Guitrys and Rips of France. And how blindly, too, they turn their backs to those comic fellows of America who might add to their matchless opulence and beauty a touch of satire, a touch of burlesque and a touch of wit above that of the Pantages circuit, the actors' club grill-room and the annual show of the Sock and Buskin Club of the Auburn Theological Seminary.

§ 12

The American Playwright.—A critic on the staff of the *Manchester Guardian,* giving himself recently to a plumb of my divers sagacities, succeeded in bringing himself more or less shrewdly to the conclusion that I was "a destructive critic who had unfortunately taken little that was noble out of the theatre." To both charges, raising my hand to heaven, kissing the Bible and swearing upon my sacred word of honour to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, I indignantly confess. I am (*1*) a destructive critic, and I have (*2*) unfortunately taken little that was noble out of the theatre. And my defence is absurdly simple. First, I am a destructive critic, taking me on the whole, because I deal chiefly with elements that are themselves most often artistically destructive. And secondly, if I have taken little that was noble out of the theatre, the theatre has taken much more that was noble out of me.

To call me a destructive critic is perfectly fair. But to believe that because I am a destructive critic I am a mere gas-bomb in the constant act of exploding over orphan asylums is akin to naming a destructive critic the man whose contract calls for the incineration of the municipal garbage. And to expect me to derive much that is noble out of

an institution that is, save on isolated and distinguished occasions, of the approximate degree of nobility of a Russian prince is surely a carrying of jokes to Oshkosh.

It is now sixteen years that I have been depositing my person professionally in theatre seats. In that period I have sat before the stages of ten different countries and have given the studious eye to four or five thousand diverse exhibits. I have seen a great panorama of comedies, dramas, tragedies, farces, knee shows, burlesques, satires, vaudevilles, whimsicalities, biographical plays, and what not. I have seen Duse do "Gioconda" and Theda Bara do "The Blue Flame"; I have seen Mitschurina as Portia and Marjorie Rambeau as "The Unknown Woman"; I have seen Alexander Moissi as Franz Moor and Robert Edeson as Strongheart the Choctaw. I have seen plays by Gerhart Hauptmann and plays in which the leading lady shouts "If you loved a woman as I love *him,* wouldn't you lie, wouldn't you dare *anything,* to keep her? You know you would! You know you would! And so did I, and I'd do it again, (*breaking down*) I'd do it again!" I have seen plays by Edmond Rostand and plays in which the character actress, face smeared with burnt cork and a sofa pillow stuck inside her chemise, cries out "A flag o' truce, Missy Gertrude. An' a pahty o' Confed'rate sojers a-comin' up de

hill. Dey am carryin' someone: he am wounded." I have seen plays by Echegaray and plays in which the heroine remorsefully takes both of her husband's hands in hers and gulps, "But I'll make up for it—you'll see! And now we're going to turn our backs on everything that's happened. We're going to look up! We're going to look ahead! We're going to start all over again, you and I, together!" And I've seen plays by Bernard Shaw and plays in which the actor in the cutaway puts his hand on the shoulder of the actor in the Norfolk jacket and says, "You see, son, I knew your mother—we might have married if—well, son, that's why I'm doing this for you." And what is the proportion of nobility that I have been able to take home with me from this mélange? Well, let us confect a liberal estimate; let us say that the proportion is in the ratio of one to three hundred. For one memorable night in the theatre, I have gladly and willingly suffered the empyreuma of three hundred crab-apples; for one splendid, beautiful and haunting evening, the gases of three hundred boob-machines. I *have* taken a measure of nobility with me out of the theatre, but to blame me for not taking nobility out of the theatre when the theatre has not provided it is surely like blaming me for not taking out of the *Manchester Guardian* a high passion for sauerkraut.

You doubtless wonder what all this has to do with an essay on the American playwright. It has this to do: it will, I hope, safeguard me from like critical charges on your part when you have finished reading what I shall write.

Initially revolving the topic of this chapter in my mind, I said to myself, "I shall at this point write an essay on the American playwright; I shall speak of his increasing eminence, especially in the instance of the young of the species; I shall single out a half dozen or so of him and make pleasant comparisons with his young European contemporaries; I shall, indeed, vary the monotony of my antecedent cavils and improbations with a little jouncy flag-wagging." Then I revolved the subject in my mind again. Vague doubts began to assail me. "Put them down; put them down!" my fond heart urged me. "Your reader is perhaps by now getting tired of your too frequent recriminations; better be canny and, by the way of proving your open-mindedness, give him a pollyanna show for a change." So I revolved the subject anew. And there follows the best that I can hoax myself to do for you.

The American dramatist is today less a realization than an expectation. He seems to be growing in stature year by year, but in only one instance has he yet reached the artistic stature of even a dra-

matist of the first second grade. He is, in the matter of surface technical ingenuity, as good as the best of them. He is, in the matter of manœuvering melodramatic incident, perhaps better than the best of them. He is, in the matter of externals generally, as proficient as any in the countries of Europe. But in the matter of internals, in the matter of insight and reflection, in the matter of sophistication, wit, philosophy, grasp of true character and every other thing that goes into the making of the soul of the true dramatist, he is most often of the rote cut of a Rochester suit of clothes. Of broad humour, he is often a happy whip; of wit, he is almost uniformly an amateur. His reflection of character is more often the shadowy reflection of a plate glass shop window than the sharp reflection of a plate glass mirror. His philosophy is generally the philosophy of an adolescent; and his sense of life generally that of one to whom life is a spectacle produced less by God than by David Belasco.

Of all the many playwrights that America has produced in the last dozen years, there is only one whose shoulders begin to lift clearly above the local crowd. That one is Eugene O'Neill: the one writer for the native stage who gives promise of achieving a sound position for himself. And by sound position I mean a position, if not with the

first dramatists of present-day Europe, at least with the very best of the European second-raters. That O'Neill will go higher than this latter rung, I seriously doubt. I judge his future not from his best things, such plays as the one-act "Moon of the Caribbees" (an admirable piece of writing) or "Beyond the Horizon" (which his confrère, Edward Sheldon, believed altogether too exaggerately drab a composition to merit attention!) or "The Straw" (with its several remarkably written scenes) or "Gold" (with its fine overtones), but from his poorest. A man's future is a matter not so much of the things he has already actually achieved as of the things he has sought to achieve and, by virtue of his intrinsic shortcomings, has been unable to. A dramatist's future, in other words, is to be measured more accurately by what he has tried to do and could not do than by what he has been able to do. I do not mean to disparage O'Neill's accomplishments—he has had, from the first day I laid an eye upon the manuscript of a one-act play which he submitted to the magazine of which I am co-editor, no better friend and more enthusiastic ballyhoo than I—but I am besieged by doubts as to his final status when I consider the vaudeville grand-guignolism, however effective, of his "In the Zone," the unintentional burlesque of his "Where the Cross Is Made," and the ibsenescence of his

"Honour Among the Bradleys" and "The Rope." These were not mere left-handed jobs. I have reason to know that O'Neill himself considered three of these plays sound efforts: he would not hear, indeed, of a suggestion that he tear up the manuscript of one of them and so get rid of the strain it would place upon his future reputation. But it may be—and I hope it will be—that I am wrong: O'Neill may, as the theatrical phrase has it, top his writings from year to year. If he does, his future is the most brilliant future that an American playwright has thus far known. And if he does not, his present is already the most brilliant present that any American playwright has thus far known, For O'Neill has an aloof dignity that no other native playwright of his day has; he has a sense of world theme, a sense of character, and he knows how to write. His weakness is the weakness of italics and of monotony. He sees life too often as drama. The great dramatist is the dramatist who sees drama as life.

What of the others? Zoë Akins, some years ago, wrote in "Papa" what is perhaps the most distinguished piece of fantastic comic writing that the present-day theatre knows: nothing has been done in Europe to equal it. But she has done nothing since that is worthy of note. Her "Magical City," "The Secret of Sienna," "Such a Charming Young

Man" and "Did It Really Happen?" are diverting little things, but not important. Her "Déclassée," for all its two well-written and full-flavoured scenes, is of the mossy stuff of the theatre of de Croisset, Pinero, et al. And her "Foot-Loose," though a polished example of play revision, obviously does not count. Rita Wellman gave an excellent, if uneven, performance with "The Gentile Wife," but her other plays show little. Rachel Barton Butler's "Mamma's Affair" is an exhibition of signs of talent rather than an exhibition of talent: it is hardly a three-act play, but rather a one-act play with a quite separate two-act play hitched to its tail. And her "The Lap Dog" is distinctly flafla. Booth Tarkington's "Clarence" is a thoroughly deft and amusing farce-comedy, but nothing else that the novelist has done in the way of playwriting causes one to pause. Avery Hopwood, a skilful fellow who started out with perhaps the brightest promise of them all, has descended lower and lower in the scale with the passing of each year: he presently devotes himself entirely to the brewing of lucrative yokel traps. Edward Sheldon has written a number of excellent, original, separate scenes, but never a play that merited serious consideration. Sheldon's mind is purely a stage-shop mind: life blows its winds across it from the wings: the fire of Sheldon is mere red and

yellow tissue paper agitated by an invisible electric fan.

We pass to others. Tom Barry, who has faded from view, wrote in "The Upstart" one of the best home-made plays thus far distilled from the Shaw récipé, and showed in such vaudeville sketches as "Nick Carter" the flickerings of a sprightly native humour. There was some merit, too, in an unproduced play of his named "Anne of Harlem." But Barry appears to have fallen in his tracks after his first spurt. Rachel Crothers has blown up completely. Anne Crawford Flexner, since her "Marriage Game," a pleasant but subordinate comedy, has done nothing to bring her into regard. Susan Glaspell has revealed skill in the one-act form, but her three-act play "Bernice" amounts to little. Lawrence Langner's "The Family Exit," despite its many crudities, was exceptionally promising: he has done nothing else worth consideration. Philip Moeller is a mere Madame Tussaud. George M. Cohan, the most proficient popular playwright in the world theatre of the present time, makes no pretence to artistic effort. Percy Mackaye makes the pretence, but that is all. Margaret Mayo has talent, but directs it only at the box-office. Edward Knoblauch, whose "Kismet" and "The Faun" are both meritorious plays—though the former is largely a compilation and the latter

a derivation from Molnar—wishes himself to be considered an Englishman, and hence is without the catalogue. Thompson Buchanan's only comparative white mark is his satirical farce "The Cub." F. Scott Fitzgerald, who has printed one-act plays but not yet had them produced, displays an uncommon hand, but what he will do in the way of full-length plays remains to be seen. Harry Leon Wilson, Rupert Hughes and other popular novelists have done nothing when they essayed the dramatic form. Eleanor Gates' "Poor Little Rich Girl" was a very good thing of its kind, but she did nothing worth while before and has done nothing since. Clare Kummer has a happy gift for light humour, but her plays—from any serious point of view—are mere drawing-room vaudeville. They are diverting little affairs but, in any final estimate, fluff. Montague Glass, a first-rate sculptor of character, a fine story-teller and a searching and excellent humourist, is not a playwright: the dramatization of his themes he regularly entrusts to such show-doctors as Roi Cooper Megrue and Jules Eckert Goodman. And the rest? Some, like Jesse Lynch Williams, James Forbes, George Bronson-Howard and Joseph Medill Patterson, have shown flashes, but the flashes have been, alas, as evanescent as summer lightning. Others—the great majority—have shown nothing.

Turn now to the older dramatists. Eugene Walter wrote "The Easiest Way," and the rest is silence. Augustus Thomas wrote an amusing farce-comedy in "The Other Girl" and buried the memory of it under a ton or two of profound jake-diddlers. George Broadhurst has done nothing. William Vaughn Moody was a college professors' pet: he could write English, but his plays were Rachmaninoff on a barrel organ. Charles Rann Kennedy is the Dr. Parkhurst of the drama: he amounts to less than nothing. Turn to the older still. Clyde Fitch was a graceful, pretty kleptomaniac: he pilfered the counters of European comedy: "The Truth," his best work and, so far as I am able to judge, one of his few purely original works, is a fair piece of comic writing—no more. Charles H. Hoyt was a very amusing fellow, but certainly of no sound importance. James A. Herne—we are always hearing much of him—well, read his plays! Bronson Howard was a distinctly inferior William Gillette, and William Gillette, while an expert melodramatist if third-rate farceur, is surely not entitled to second thought. Consider these bravos of yesterday: I take the names of the leaders from the volume of Arthur Hobson Quinn called "Representative American Plays": Steele Mackaye, a paleolithic Winchell Smith; Bronson Howard, an early Siamese Twin, half Henry De

Mille and half Clay M. Greene; William Gillette, a highly proficient and polished Theodore Kremer; David Belasco, a theatrical Forepaugh; Clyde Fitch, a suave and skilful parrot; Langdon Mitchell, the best of the lot, who wrote one moderately adroit comedy and then apparently went to bed for the rest of his life; and so on down the list to the great "dean" of the hour, M. Augustus Thomas, the molasses spa. What a gay procession of genius! And before these master-minds, these American Shakespeares and Molières, the field is even less rich: the names, for all the persistent effort to sentimentalize them, are already half-forgotten: history will dig and shovel here in vain.

But from all these, young and old, living and dead, I omit one name, a name that perhaps came nearer taking its place at the head of all American dramatists than any other. The man who bears this name was closer to the writing of vivid, racy, faithful, sound native drama than any man before or since him. And that man is—or was—George Ade. One speaks of him, alas, in the past tense: he gave up writing for the stage even as his talents were mounting to their full flower. But his "College Widow" and his "County Chairman," the former in particular, were worth any dozen plays offered up by his American confrères in competition with him. Ade wrote Frank Merriwell and Edward

Westcott plots; he wrote with what was almost a Walther Hasenklever indifference to technique, form and finish; he wrote for the stage in terms of the circus tent. But for all that, with his observing humour, his healthy satire, his understanding of his people, he came nearer writing first-rate, real American drama than any other man I know.

§ 13

The Decline of Beauty.—More and more there becomes impressed upon the professional observer of the American theatre the glum fact that feminine beauty, once its proudest challenge, seems presently almost completely to have departed its stage. In the last eight or nine years the American dramatic stage, quondam purchase of Ethel Barrymores not yet grown fat and of Marie Doros not yet fingered by Time, has revealed but one or two young women upon whose faces the virtuoso might look without fear of æsthetic razzle-dazzle. And in the same period the American music show stage, erstwhile roost of countless *bijoux*, has vouchsafed at the very most not more than seven or eight young women of a comeliness above the shop-girl average. The balance, on both stages, has with small exception offered up a parade of pie-faces unparalleled this side of Madrid.

What has become of the stage pretty woman? Where are the modern Gladys Wallises and Sandol Millikens, the present day Edna Wallaces and Mabel Carriers? Where the new Julia Marlowes of twenty-one, and the new Madeline Besleys and Vashti Earles and, as I say, the Ethel Barrymores before they become Gothic? In the moving pictures? I doubt it. There are one or two young women in that outhouse of the arts who merit a second look, but the vast majority therein, as upon the stage, are either granted chromos or sedulously curl-papered and thumb-sucking lassies of forty.

The Ziegfeld "Follies," once rich in passable women, has lately disclosed little greatly superior to the girls in the Folies Bergère and Monti's Operettenhaus. The dramatic stage, once adorned by young Pauline Fredericks and Elsie Fergusons, has lately, with the minor exceptions noted, revealed nothing more beautiful than may be found behind Macy counters. There is visible on both stages a certain amount of brash, common beauty—the sort of beauty that one gets in modistes' models—but scarcely a trace of the beauty that appeals to the species of man who does not drink his whiskey straight.

§ 14

Addendum.—The bulk of musical comedy reminiscence consists wistfully in remembering homely girls as having been very pretty.

§ 15

The Five Hundred and First That.—There was last year submitted to connoisseurs of art and letters an educational opuscule by the Professors Mencken and Nathan entitled "The American Credo: A Contribution Toward the Interpretation of the National Mind." In this work the talented gentlemen in question endeavoured to depict, through a compilation of the common articles of the popular faith, the American ganglionic nerve-cell, nerve-fibre, sustentacular and vascular tissue in action. It was the effort to show that the national philosophy is a bloom whose roots, searched out to the nethermost fibril, are grounded in the perfectly serious, if apparently doodlish, convictions that one never sees a Frenchman drunk, all the souses whom one sees in Paris being Americans; that the Germans eat six regular meals a day, and between times stave off their appetite with numerous Schweitzer cheese sandwiches, liverwurst and beer; that David Belasco teaches his actresses how to express

emotion by giving them black eyes and pulling them around the stage by the hair; that all Japanese butlers are lieutenants in the Japanese Navy, and that they read and copy all letters received by the folks they work for; that all negroes who show any intelligence whatever are actually two-thirds white, and the sons of United States Senators; that Italian children, immediately they leave the cradle, are sewed into their underclothes, and that they never get a bath thereafter until they are confirmed; that George M. Cohan and Irving Berlin can only play the piano with one finger; that when a Chinese laundryman hands one a slip for one's laundry, the Chinese letters which he writes on the slip have nothing to do with the laundry, but are in reality a derogatory description of the owner; that Polish women are so little human that one of them can have a baby at 8 a. m. and cook her husband's dinner at noon; that an elephant has a wonderful memory, will after a lapse of twenty years recall a man who gave him a rotten peanut, and will soak him a crack with his trunk; that—

Well, some five hundred other such thats followed, though among them there was lacking one that might well have been included in the metaphysical synopsis. And this was that the theatrical taste of the Broadway first-night audience is on a par with that of a chiropodist and is responsible

for the generic affinity of the American drama to a dog show. It is perfectly true, of course, that there are regularly a number of persons in the Broadway first-night audience of an intellectual and social quality almost as intense as that of a first-class mule, but it is equally true that, despite the incorporation of this element into the first-night audience, this same first-night audience is on the whole as receptive, as generous and as percipient a theatre audience as one may expect to find anywhere.

A theatre audience, wherever one finds it, is at best an indifferent congress, since the theatre, wherever one finds it, appeals at best to the first-rate second-raters of a nation's civilization, and on the average to a run of folk infinitely lower. If the New York first-night audience is no Académie Française, the Paris first-night audience—we have the best Parisians' word on it—isn't one either. And no one of us who has mingled as well among first-night audiences in Berlin, London and Madrid is under any illusion that the caucus of social pushers, "angels," actors, chronic boulevardiers, girl-chasers and theatrical agents who constitute the mass of such audiences is a diet of Corinthians. If the New York first-night gang hailed "Peg o' My Heart" a pearl without price, so did the London. If the New York first-nighters voted "Sherlock Holmes" a greater work than they voted Ibsen's

"John Gabriel Borkman," so did the Paris. And if the New York first-nighters received "Alias Jimmy Valentine" as a gift straight from Heaven, so did the Berlin.

It is probable that the New York first-night audience, barring perhaps its newspaper reviewers, has a better record for recognizing and endorsing sound drama than any other American audience, whether second-night or twentieth-night. The notion that it was the New York first-night audience that placed its imprimatur upon such successful whim-wham as "East Is West," "Experience," "Three Wise Fools" and "Three Faces East"—to name but four instances out of forty—is nonsense: any person who was present at these premières will recall the unmistakable coolness that pervaded the auditoriums. These plays have succeeded despite their first-night audiences, not because of them. Belasco, the best of American showmen, apparently afraid of the typical Broadway first-night audience, shrewdly excludes it by buying up the entire house and filling the auditorium with handpicked boosters. The New Theatre produced good plays, barred out the regular Broadway first-night audience, filled the chairs instead with conspicuous personages in metropolitan politics, finance, society and letters—and blew up. The Rialto first-night mob, loud, cheap, vulgar in manner and appearance, has yet—as

white clover is seen sometimes to grow out of a dunghill—bequeathed success to "Peter Pan" where a Washington first-night audience had bequeathed failure, and to "The Poor Little Rich Girl" where a Philadelphia first-night audience had bequeathed failure, and to "Justice" where a Boston first-night audience had bequeathed failure, and to "Good Gracious Annabelle" where a New Haven-Yale first-night audience had bequeathed failure, and to "Old Lady 31," "Clarence," *et al.*, where other such American first-night audiences, commonly regarded as of superior quality, had similarly bequeathed failure.

The Broadway first-night audience has enthusiastically received a Bahr's "Master," a Tolstoi's "Redemption," a Knoblauch's "Kismet," a Benelli's "Jest," a Tarkington's "Seventeen," a Shakespeare's "Richard III," a Rostand's "L'Aiglon," an Echegaray's "El Gran Galeoto," and a Shaw's "Fanny's First Play" for every second Peg Franklin's "Thunder" and Sam Shipman's "First Is Last" that it has snickered out of court. It has turned a cold shoulder to many "Mister Antonios," "Flames," "Omar the Tentmakers," "Birds of Paradise," "Way Down Easts," "Roads to Happiness," "Cures for Curables" and such like hick-fetchers that have subsequently gone out into the centres of American culture and made fortunes. And if it not infrequently

votes some "Bought and Paid For" or some "Tailor-Made Man" a great art work, let it not be forgotten that the presumably more cultured audiences which follow it, not only in New York but in the outlying capitals, support its judgment.

Percy Hammond, the Chicago sarcey, lately confected a *chronique scandaleuse* on the New York first-night gathering whereof the most stinging cuff, as I recall, was an allusion to the predominant number of loud-mouthed, gum-chewing, hatchet faces. Quite true. So far as countenance goes, the New York first-night audience is in the main fully as lovely as the floor of a Russian barbershop after a busy day. And so far as manners go, as cavalier as a gas-man. But what have looks and manners to do with the case? The smart and mannerful audiences assembled upon invitation by Winthrop Ames for his premières have uniformly proved as unresponsive and inept as a theatre audience well can be. And see what has happened to the Stage Society with its especially selected audience! . . . Georg Brandes chews tobacco. Joseph Conrad looks like a Bolsh. Anatole France is surely no oriole. Sir Almroth Wright, they say, likes to drink his tea out of the saucer. And the greatest imaginative artist in America is in the habit, as his friends' rugs will bear ample testimony, of expectorating on the floor. . . . As the

better understanding and keener appreciation of music is to be found not in the Golden Horseshoe with its St. Paul's School-Harvard kultur, but among the ugly, lowly folk in the high galleries, so —though clearly in lesser degree—is the more accurate response to drama to be found not in the post-dinner party cultures of sequent performances, but in the uncouth yet theatre-loving Rialto first-night enthusiasts.

In this theatre-love and enthusiasm, a love and enthusiasm that are extravagantly inclusive, that embrace the worst with the best, we have, indeed, the surest confounding of those who most loudly inveigh against the New York first-night audience. If this audience praises everything indiscriminately —as its critics contend—how can it be said of the audience that it is hurtful to the production of good plays? If an audience cheers Marjorie Rambeau in "The Unknown Woman" with the same vigour that it cheers Tarkington's "Clarence," the audience may be a damn fool but it is certainly not an audience either hostile to or corruptive of the production of a good play. . . . Well, I dare say that I carefully present only the prettier side of the picture. But the picture is perhaps not without that side. What, indeed, would happen to the American drama if it were regularly divulged for the first time—over a period of ten years, say,—

to an audience made up entirely of Columbia University professors?

The Broadway first-night audience is doubtless not nearly so much to blame as the Broadway producers who, imagining that it is what it is not, cater to its hypothetical ignorance, vulgarity and artistic anæsthesia. The consequence, even in terms of the drama that is piffle, is piffle pifflissimo. For thus we get the procession of plays like "Five O'Clock" in which the initially amusing story of a man in an insane asylum who, upon getting his freedom, goes to live with his relatives, gives ear for a spell to their empty conversation and stupid social enterprises, and then one night sneaks back to the comfort and comparative sanity of the asylum —in which this satiric story is converted into the yokel tale of a man in an insane asylum who fights to prove his sanity that he may take up his life again with these very relatives. And thus we get the procession of motion picture masterpieces like "Broken Blossoms" in which the Limehouse district in London is spectacularly depicted as rich in Chinese in their picturesquely embroidered native kimonos, where the sad truth is that the great majority of the residents of that quarter dress very much like Harry Kemp.

§ 16

Always?—You say that it is possible for drama always to reflect life? Very well, then answer me this. In the cabled dispatches from the European fighting countries, there appeared during the war an account of the astounding, spectacular heroism, in the face of a death-filled fire, of a German soldier named Gustav Dinkelblatz. If you can reconcile yourself to the notion of a man named Gustav Dinkelblatz as the hero of a play of whatever sort, you win.

§ 17

Dreiser's Play.—It is called "The Hand of the Potter." Announced for production by the Coburns, it remains still between book covers. Arthur Hopkins has said that it is the best American play that has been submitted to him and that he would eagerly have produced it had not Dreiser imposed upon him so many bulls, caveats and salvos. Mencken, Dreiser's most faithful critical mount, private shimmy dancer and masseur at large, says that Hopkins is crazy and that it is one of the worst American plays he has read. Burton Rascoe, the Middle West's leading journalistic critic of the arts, informs me that it has made a considerable impression upon him; T. R. Smith,

erudite *sposo* to the *Century*, has said the same; the theatrical producers, aside from Hopkins, to whom the manuscript was submitted have observed that it is, in their estimation, largely fustian. It has given birth to boisterous palm pounders, tin-sheet shakers and shillabers on the right hand, and to nose wrinklers, tongue stickers and loud sneezers on the left. I find myself occuping a position in the no-man's land stretching between the two camps —but rather far to the left.

The story of a victim of a certain phase of Kraft-Ebbing demoralization—one has a sneaking suspicion that the late Leo Frank case may in a general way have suggested the theme to the author—Dreiser has written a play whose chief merit (as it is ever one of Dreiser's most notable assets) consists in the achievement, in the very teeth of life's low derisory comedy, of a poignant and tragic pity. This deep compassion, this summoning forth, honestly and soundly, of forbearance, this is the note Dreiser can strike as few other Americans can strike it. Out of the tin of the grotesque, the ignoble and the mean, he can evoke the golden E flat of human frailty and charity as few modern Europeans can evoke it. And yet with never a suspicion of the bogus "heart interest" that passes promiscuously for the currency of art, with never a suspicion of slyly studied fact blue-pencilling or

of self-compromise. From "Sister Carrie" down through "Jennie Gerhardt" and, with but a few skips, on to "Twelve Men," one encounters always this grim and understanding heart upon a hilltop, at once moved and immobile, at once condemning and forgiving: without sentimentality as without imperturbation. You will find it perhaps at its most eloquent in his chapter, "My Brother Paul"—"And you, my good brother! Here is the story you wanted me to write, this little testimony to your memory, a pale, pale symbol of all I think and feel"—a really first-rate, immensely realistic, and affecting arrangement of the jigsaw of the eternal marriage of the ridiculous and the gentle. And though the amalgam of heart and eye, the one warm and the other cold, dresses his play not so convincingly, it is yet there to breathe into the work a something that in its absence would have left the play a mere third-rate Third Avenue melodramatic mossback snare not much above the quality of such thirty cent magnets of yesterday as "Devil's Island."

The dramatist Dreiser is the precocious bad boy of the novelist Dreiser: that offspring of the artist who looks upon the stage as a neighbour's apple orchard wherein to penetrate by night enveloped in a bed-spread, scare off with sepulchral groans the watchful Spitz, and make away with the pippins.

The bed-spread and the groans are apparent in each of the various short plays that Dreiser has written, as they are doubly apparent (Dreiser has doubtless grown tired of waiting and wishes to "knock 'em off their seats" now or never) in this, his first long play. The girl stretched out in the coffin, the fourth dimensional dramaturgy with its divers laughing gases, the violent sensationalism of the defloration of the eleven year old Kittie Neafie by the degenerate Berchansky—this is the crescendo Dreiser box-office attack; the last in particular the do-or-die dive against the Rialto show pews. And what is more, if the Coburns put on the play down in the Greenwich Village Theatre—away from Broadway—I somehow feel that its scandalous air will presently draw to it enough of jay Broadway to make Dreiser the money upon which he had his eye when he wrote it. For that Dreiser wrote the play with a Rolls-Royce in view seems to me as certain as that he writes his novels with nothing in view but the novels.

"The Hand of the Potter" has three extremely effective theatrical scenes: the attack scene at the conclusion of the first act (in effect similar to the scene at the conclusion of the first act of a prize play of twenty years ago called "Chivalry"); the scene in the second act wherein the suspicions and fears of the mother and father of the demented boy tremble

upon their lips; and the scene wherein the crazed, pursued pervert closes the door against the child Hagar and demoniac temptation. I am probably unfair to Dreiser when I bluntly characterize these scenes as mere stage melodrama: there is something more to them than merely that. But that they were initially conceived less for their intrinsic relevance and integrity than for their more obvious yokel-power, I somehow can't disbelieve. Conceived otherwise, their brazen baldness, for all the well-known stubborn and eccentric hand that executed them, must have taken on at least a show of the reticence that is currently nowhere visible.

The balance of the manuscript reveals here and there a touch or two of moderately good characterization, but little more. The structure of the play is disjointed and awkward. The third act, jumping à la Hal Reid from the Berchansky flat to the grand jury room of the Criminal Courts Building, invades the continuity of the action: the third act might better have followed up the action of the preceding act after a slight lapse of time, in the locâle of that act. The long monologues of the insane boy, though logical and sound enough, are repetitious and tiresome. The German dialect of such a straight character as Emil Daubenspeck—"ich vuss by a liddle chob in Sixty-fift' Sthreet und vuss going down troo der lot by Fairst Affenoo back of mein

house da"—smacks rebelliously of Sam Bernard, as the "I can't give you her exack langwidge . . . she was kinda nervous an' a-fidgitin' with 'er hands this-a-way" of such a straight character as Rufus Bush smacks of William Hodge. And as the Irish McKagg's "divil a bits" and "sure, ye'll be afther sayin's" suggest the Russell Brothers and the Yiddish Berchansky's "oi, oi's," "ach's" and sedulous use of the "v" sound, Ben Welch.

The play, in brief, though probably a financial success if handled with a sufficiently cunning showmanship, falls short on a score of counts. It has a touch of the great and gorgeous pity; it has twenty touches of the great and gorgeous whangdoodle. It belongs very largely to the Dreiser who writes for the *Saturday Evening Post* and goes to see Henry B. Walthall in the moving pictures; it is not the work of the Theodore Dreiser who has written some of America's finest novels. *That* Dreiser could never seriously have written such an idiotic scene, for example, as that of the newspaper reporters' colloquy in the last act: not unless he appreciated the idiocy of the general Broadway theatrical audience as well as I.

§ 18

The Technique of Reticence.—The leading virtue of comedy is what may be called the technique of

reticence. A comedy treated with this technique gains its force, paradoxically, from its very lack of force: such a comedy is as nervously arresting in its absence of explosion as an unachieved sneeze. The American writer of comedy fails to appreciate this. He seizes his theme roughly by the arm, marches it straight down to the footlight trough, constrains it to fix the audience's eye and, thus poised, brings it to deliver its high tidings in the voice of a Sixth Avenue auctioneer. The European more often very quietly causes his theme to peek periodically around the corner of a screen and whisper. Than the incidental touch thus achieved, nothing is more valuable to comedy.

§ 19

The Play of Yesterday.—It is the general transaction of playmakers who essay to recapture the atmosphere, spirit and romance of an earlier generation—of the New York of the '70's, say—to go no further in original enterprise than to lay hold of a perfectly commonplace contemporaneous play, raise the ceilings of the modern sets four or five feet, cover the modern furniture with red plush and lace tidies, put bustles on the modern women characters, sprinkle the text liberally with allusions to Horace Greeley and Niblo's Garden, and then seek

to pass off the whole as a freshly imaginative, retrospective product. From this familiar practise the average playmaker seldom deviates. His composition is in the main merely the current rubber-stamp Rialto ware with the actors dressed up like a Fiske O'Hara troupe and given to an elaborate hocus-pocus of lighting the electric lamps with matches. Whenever his intrinsically familiar present-day ware shows signs of betraying its unmistakable 1921 countenance, he hops into the breach with some such false-face as having a character refer to George Eliot's newest book, Delmonico's restaurant in Fourteenth Street, the new high velocipedes or Tony Pastor. But no one is fooled save the playmaker himself.

§ 20

On Actors.—Choosing the stage as a profession, American women make a much better showing than American men for the same reason that Englishmen make a much better showing than American men. Women, and Englishmen, are actors by nature.

§ 21

Percy Mackaye.—Mr. Percy Mackaye, to whom polite reference has already been made, is the

American drama's Exalted Grand Moohoogab of Ennui. He has his rivals, true, but his esoteric talent for converting an audience of wide-awake persons into sound snoozers permits him masterfully to outstrip all his competitors and win the garland of gooseberries for his own. The virtuosity of the fellow in this direction is little short of amazing. He can take a theme overflowing with interesting possibilities and, with brilliant aplomb, divest it of each one of the interesting possibilities before a body can say Jack Robinson. Give him a theme soever lively and he will miraculously turn it into an opiate with the alacrity and dexterity of a Hermann or a Kellar. The most recent coup of the Moohoogab is an exhibition given the name "George Washington." It is reasonably safe to assume that, in setting out upon this particular enterprise, it was Mackaye's intention to project a more or less dramatic picture of the man known to history as the Father of His Country. But what Mackaye has characteristically achieved is vastly less a dramatic picture of the Father of His Country than a dramatic picture of a Drama League poet dressed up like him. As Mackaye pictures him, the greatest man that America has ever produced is a humourless elocutionist given periodically to throwing his cape over his shoulder in the manner of a provincial actor playing "Ruy Blas" and to reciting strophes from

Appleton's Primary Grade History of the American Revolution in the voice of an undertaker. There is no more life to the character than there is to a bottle of Apollinaris that has been opened for an hour. He is wooden, prosy, completely devoid of life and inspiration: a lay figure upon the knees of Mackaye, the High School ventriloquist. . . . What with the current wholesale occupation of our stages by this historical gallery of Washingtons, Abraham Lincolns, John Wilkes Booths, Sewards, Alexander Hamiltons, Sophie Arnoulds, Von Glucks, Martha Washingtons, General Grants, Patrick Henrys, Lawrence Washingtons, Myles Coopers, Tom Paines, James Monroes, Marquises de Lafayette, Betsy Rosses and General Knoxes, and what with the impending Drinkwater General Lees, John Browns and Oliver Cromwells, one begins to sigh again for such of our dear old stage friends as Skinnem and Cheatem, the lawyers, Dinkelspiel, the concertina manufacturer, Abner Witherbee, the cruel landlord, and O'Flaherty, the Central Office detective.

§ 22

The Triumph of Virtue.—The theory that virtue must always be triumphant at eleven o'clock if the play is to make a box-office haul—the theory close to the hearts of Rialto showmakers—is re-

sponsible for the financial failure of many an intrinsically lucrative product. The triumphant virtue delusion is one of the toughest articles in the credo of the popular playwright. He sticks to it as faithfully and unswervingly as if it were a divine revelation. And yet—as observed—the truth is that his arbitrary adherence to it is the principal cause of countless commercial failures that have otherwise all the properties of success.

The popular audience, if the playwright is shrewd enough to juggle with it dexterously, often cherishes the triumph of villainy with a gusto comparable to its hypothetical undeviating relish for the triumph of virtue. "Raffles" and "Officer 666," "Arsène Lupin" and "Cheating Cheaters," "The Great Lover" and "Stop Thief," are examples. Each is, morally speaking, a greater or lesser triumph of likable crookedness over less likable honesty. There are many others. George M. Cohan, the most sagacious box-office prestidigitator of them all, rarely fails to inject at least a touch of victorious rascality into his various plays. And Winchell Smith, second only to Cohan in sagacity, has made a fortune by turning the accepted virtue formula topsy-turvy in "Turn to the Right." A theatre audience favours immorality, if the immoral character is an engaging one. It favoured the immoral character in the Armstrong-Mizner suc-

cess "The Deep Purple" (the rôle so well played by the late Jameson Lee Finney); it favoured the immoral Serge in the Caillavet-Flers success, "The King"; it favours always vice attractively presented.

§ 23

Sacha Guitry.—Sacha Guitry's frothy little masques, for years the delight of the Parisian, are unique in the theatre. A touch of high comedy, a touch of low farce, a touch of wistful sentimental fantasy, a touch of profound drama, a touch even of revue (for Guitry has in such things as "Après," produced in the Théâtre Michel, dabbled in the libretto)—all go into the composition of the typical Guitry divertissement. And the result is as of a gay story told in a comfortable club corner, an alluring adventure in a far twilit street, a flirtation at the florist's, a cane-swinging saunter down the Champs Elysées, a cocktail or two or three, a saucy give and take, in the company of an amiable and very agreeable gentleman.

This Guitry represents a phase of the theatre that has always interested me. A distilled composite in artistic personality of Max Dearly, Thaddeus Rittner, Clare Kummer, G. P. Huntley, the earlier Arthur Schnitzler and a round half dozen of the Rue Chaptal farce writers, the comedies he

designs for the use of himself and his latest wife are without question among the best examples of thoroughbred and polished boulevard diversion that the current European theatre knows. They are, true enough, not important writing—they are the stuff merely of transient chuckles and internal smiles—but they accomplish better the thistle-farce they set out to accomplish than any other such present-day plays I know of. Such Guitry things as "Jean III, ou L'Irresistible Vocation du Fils Mondoucet," "La Prise de Berg-op-Zoom," "Un Beau Mariage," "Le Veilleur de Nuit," "L'Illusioniste," "Le Mufle," "La Scandale de Monte Carlo," "Faisons Un Rêve" and "Mon Père Avait Raison" are among the most gratifying light theatrical memories of the modern French stage.

§ 24

The Star System and Poor Plays.—The argument of the writers for the dailies that the production of a piddling play like Mark Reed's "She Would and She Did"—simply because a star actress happened to find its leading rôle rich in opportunities for personal exploitation—constitutes a loud hoot at the star system is of a piece with an argument which would maintain that because one sometimes finds a fly in noodle soup, the fly constitutes a blanket

case against noodle soup. Quite contrary to being an argument against the star system, the presentation of such an exceptionally poor play as that named is an argument for the star system since—by virtue of the barriers of amateurish writing and technique which it assiduously interposes against the star's talent—it contrives to develop that talent as talent is ever developed when confronted with handicap and challenge. An actor or an actress is not developed—nor is the quality of acting best to be improved—by good plays; it takes bad plays to school and ripen. If it is true that no actor has ever failed as Hamlet, it is equally true that no actress has ever failed as Cyprienne. But where a second-rate actor or actress can pass muster in a good play, helped as he or she is by the author's fertile imagination, finished writing and smooth technique, it takes a first-rate actor—or at least an actor of first-rate potentialities—to get away with an unyielding, hide-bound bad play. And any bad play that brings out the first-rate qualities of even a second-rate actor, by offering that actor at every turn the difficult defiance of an author's shortcomings, surely provides a good argument in favour of a system that develops and broadens our actors, whether star or non-star.

To argue further, as have some of the gentlemen, that the star system was in this particular case re-

sponsible for the production of the aforementioned opiate, that save for the complacency of the star actress in question it assuredly would never have been produced, is even more widely to miss the mark. In support whereof I offer up the fact that another producing manager, to whom the manuscript was originally submitted under the title of "Golf," planned to present the play without a star and finally gave up the notion only because the play which he was then presenting in his contracted-for theatre turned out to be an unexpected financial success and because no other theatre at an equally low rental—permitting him to make a profit on a box-office as low as $5,500 a week—was available.

Such a piece as "She Would and She Did" is infinitely less an argument against the star system than an argument against certain stars who are currently part of that system. Not against these stars as actors, but against them as judges of manuscripts. For one star like Faversham or Ditrichstein who generally knows a good play when he reads one, there are two like Miss Grace George who, once they no longer safely rely on the old reliables of repertoire, fall for a grand parade of "Richest Girls," "Sylvia of the Letters," "Earths," "Eve's Daughters," "Sauces for the Goose," "Just to Get Marrieds" and "She Would and She Dids," to say nothing of an equal number of potboilers

such as "The Ruined Lady," "Carnival," "Miss Prudence," "Half a Bride," etc., annually tried out in Plainfield, N. J., and Stamford, Conn., and subsequently shelved. This Miss George, to whom the Reed labour owes its production, is—as I have observed throughout the sixteen year period of my receiving passes—perhaps the most proficient and brilliant comedienne on the American stage. But, as I have also observed during the same period, this same Miss George is not only the poorest judge of dramatic manuscripts on that stage but, more, a performer with evidently so little confidence in her own established brilliance and her own amazingly durable blonde comeliness that she resorts to all of the cheap contrast subterfuges of the hinterland Thespian in sedulously surrounding herself upon the platform with an entourage of brunette frights and male incompetents so grotesque that it must be gathered together only after the most painstaking effort and diligent search.

§ 25

Journalistic Dramatic Criticism.—The argument that journalistic dramatic criticism is necessarily of too hurried a nature, that it lacks the deliberation to make it duly sober and valuable, impresses me as so much nonsense. A newspaper reviewer has at

least an hour in which briefly to set down his criticism of a play: he rarely writes more than half a column, or approximately five hundred words: he generally has at least twenty minutes or half an hour for free deliberation—to say nothing of all the time that he is in the theatre—before he takes his pen and paper in hand. Surely there is here no herculean task. Surely any intelligent man who knows his craft can write half a column of intelligent analysis in an hour, after he has pondered his subject during the two hours he has sat before it and during the half hour it has taken him to get from the theatre to his writing table. Surely the average play he sees imposes no strain upon his sagacities. And if the play is above the average, if it is the work of a first-rate, or of even a second-rate, author, he has been able to study it in advance from the printed page, since the majority of the more important plays are printed and published in advance of theatrical revealment.

The weakness of journalistic dramatic criticism lies in another direction. Journalistic dramatic criticism in America, save in three or four instances, is not too hurried and too lacking in deliberation to make it sound: it is too little hurried and too little lacking in deliberation to make it sound. Or at least, approximately sound. The majority of men who write this criticism are ex-reporters accustomed

to quick decisions, quick judgments, quick analyses, quick transcriptions and recordings. As reporters, they are still alert, sensitive men. And, as reporters, they are handicapped and hamstrung by the comparative leisure which their new work vouchsafes them. They are not used to calm and deliberation; they are used to hurry, to snapshot thinking, to literal, hair-trigger commentary. And, given time for meditative loafing, they are lost, as a circus bareback rider is lost on the bridle path. They are given time for analysis and ratiocination, and they think it their duty to analyze and deduce. In a word, to turn professor, doctor. The sensation, to them, is a peculiar one. And the results, to us, are even more peculiar.

§ 26

On Critics.—Of critics, the one I can least stomach is the thunder-stealer who slyly and regularly goes in for the "As someone has aptly remarked" and the "As someone has cleverly observed" dido. He is the kleptomaniac of criticism, the shoplifter in the literary jewelry store, the left-handed glory grabber. He is a critic in the sense that a phonograph is an opera singer. He borrows the cigar, borrows the tip-clipper, borrows the holder, borrows the match—and then congratulates himself

warmly upon achieving by himself the climacteric grand spit.

§ 27

A Comique.—Raymond Hitchcock is one of the most effective music show comedians on our stage for a simple reason. Where the majority of his colleagues believe that humour is best to be evoked by exhibiting themselves in the grotesque regalia of the professional jester, Hitchcock realizes that a red nose, green pants and pretzel-shaped eyebrows are akin to the deadly prefacing of a joke with "Here's a funny story." He therefore exposes himself not as King Tim Buctoo, nor as Professor Ambrose Golightly, nor as the Mogul of Pupu—not as a freak with cardboard ears and a mechanical moustache—not as any such stencil of the passé musical comedy platform—but simply as Hitchcock: the same Hitchcock that parades Broadway, gets shaved in the Lambs' Club, lunches at the Claridge, and pays ten cents to get his hat back. And the result is the obviously amusing one.

If a man is a funny man naturally, he is a funny man on the stage: that is, if he has chosen the stage as his profession. If he isn't a funny man naturally, all the best jokes that Henry Blossom ever wrote, all the carmine nose paint on Broadway and all the maroon pants in Cain's storehouse can't

make him one. Hitchcock is a good comedian not because he gets librettists to write him comical lines (he usually hires very dull librettists), not because he was born with a funny face (his face isn't a bit funnier than Robert Mantell's), not because he wears a polychromatic wardrobe (he dresses on the street with not much less vehemence than he dresses on the stage)—he is a good comedian simply because God made him one and because he has the sound sense not to attempt, with grotesque wigs and paints, to gild the lily. . . . George Bickel is a good comedian for the same reason. And for the same reason Eddie Foy is not. And Jefferson de Angelis is not. And nine out of ten of the current pantaloons are not.

§ 28

W. Somerset Maugham.—Once again in "Cæsar's Wife" (*née* "Made in Heaven") we observe the author of "The Moon and Sixpence" writing like the author of "The Explorer." The theatrical Maugham remains still the novelist of the latter work: he is as far from the novelist of the former —or "Of Human Bondage"—as are Kolb and Dill from the German Reichstag. It is a phenomenon that confounds the critic.

The novelist Maugham shows a constant growth;

the playwright Maugham is, as he began, merely an inferior Hubert Henry Davies. His latest effort is a rehash of St. James's Theatre comedy on end: a humourless disposition of the marionettes of Grundy, Sutro et Cie upon the eternal triangle checkerboard. The meticulously valeted M.P., K.C. of a husband with the talcum-sprinkled hair, the flouncy young wife Violet, and the young secretary of the legation are duly moved from square to square until theatre time arrives for the young secretary to fall in love with the rich American girl from Chicago and for the young wife to realize her husband's worth—he has known all along of her girlish infatuation but has nobly eaten out his heart in silence—and fall with a happy gargle into his arms. How many times have we all sat before this fable, a fable perfumed for the democrats with high-sounding titles, numerous allusions to "the Embassy," magnificently caparisoned servants, "The Blue Danube" played "off" in an imaginary ball-room, and much airy talk of London, Paris, Rome and Cairo!

If poetry, in Wordsworth's phrase, takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity, comedy of this common species takes its origin from tranquillity recollected in emotion. The emotion is not intrinsically meretricious, but rather misplaced and malapropos. It calls for the purge of a

reflective wit and humour. Without this wit and humour such comedy is a teapot in a tempest.

§ 29

Benavente.—The propaganda in behalf of Jacinto Benavente's sublimity, its lethargic flanks assiduously spurred and whacked on by the indefatigable Señor Underhill, fails to move me. Than the good Underhill, fugleman for the Sociedad de Autores Españoles in the United States, the Sociedad could find no more enthusiastic consul did it search the Ohios and Iowas from end to end. To Underhill, every Spanish playwright is a *maestro*. Let one, however humble, put five cents' worth of stamps on his manuscript and ship it over here to our friend and, upon reading it, our friend promptly sits himself down and composes a ten thousand word preface announcing its author as a great genius who, owing to the peculiar *geografia* and hence difficulty comprehended temperamental *idealismo* and *pequenéces* of the Catalinian *lapidoso arroyo,* will, alas, be perhaps underestimated by Americans. To the ebullient Underhill there isn't a Sammie Shipman in the whole Spanish theatre: every playwright is "notable," "distinguished," "a compelling figure," "brilliantly daring and original," "a peerless satirist," "a master spirit," "an

expert of experts," or, when the good Underhill has the megrims and loses temporarily his bestewment, perhaps only "an amazingly clairvoyant mind."

In behalf of Benavente, in particular, doth the effervescent Underhill spread himself. Benavente, according to our Underhill, is the very crême de la crême, the very ruby, indeed the very *meraviglia, cindad alegre y confiada,* not to say *minestrone* and *zabalgione,* of modern dramatists. Benavente, indeed further, is—observes our friend—not merely a great dramatist, like Shakespeare or Molière, but an elegant of the clubs, a *chevalier aux dames,* an invincible swordsman, a crack shot, a slayer of wild elephantos, a remarkable actor, a practised prestidigitator, a connoisseur of foods and rare wines, a very fashionable dresser, an excellent bridge player, an expert dancer (his especial forte is the side-dip maxixe), a portrait painter and very humorous cartoonist, a fellow known to all the tony Madrid headwaiters, a very fair pianist and a splendid trombone player, a penetrating critic of arts, letters and psychogenesis, a collector of cyathaxoniidæ, and a fine bass singer. "He has traveled extensively," writes Underhill, "and is conversant with the languages and literatures of Western Europe and of America, in which he is familiarly at home. No vital subject is alien to him. His field is world-wide, and his sympathies are of

cosmopolitan range. . . . His style pervades the whole of his work with the effortless clarity of the last manner of Velázquez, which is as if it had never met with an obstacle in the world. Such a style comes only to the maturity of a great artist. . . . Every idea of Benavente's is an idea and a half. . . . 'I do not make my plays for the public,' says Benavente; 'I make the public for my plays!' . . . Benavente has written one-act plays, musical plays, allegories, farces in one, two and three acts; he has made a prose version of 'King Lear'; he has made some notable translations from the English, Catalan, French and American; he has written comedies, tragedies, cycloramic spectacles, satires. . . . He has tried his hand at almost every *genre*, and has been successful in them all—peasant drama and the tragedy of blood, satires of provincial and metropolitan society, of the aristocracy, dramas of the middle class, court comedy in the most subtle and refined of forms, romantic comedies and dramas, rococo spectacles, imaginative fairy plays of genuine poetic worth. In all these different *genres* he has moved with consummate ease. Benavente is not only an artist, he is much more; he is a master of life! His unity and his complexity partake of the multifariousness of the modern world!" . . . And so, our friend, for eight or nine thousand words.

Another of this towering genius' *opera,* "La Malquerida," was recently imported to these shores. It discloses itself to be an ably constructed but perfectly empty piece of stage writing. Built up to a theatrically effective last-act scene wherein a girl hysterically confesses her love, long masked as hatred, for her mother's second husband, its preliminary materials are revelatory of little more artistic dramatic force than is the gift of such second-rate Frenchmen as Bernstein and de Croisset. His characters are developed not in the manner of imaginative photography with its careful study, its careful adjustment of lights and shadows, its careful development and printing, but in the manner of snapshots. He is a serviceable technician of the stage, but he builds with the hand and the mind of a Sardou. The other plays of his with which I am acquainted—I know the bulk of his dramatic writing fairly well—do not persuade me much more greatly. He is, at his best, a distinctly inferior Echegaray. He is, at his worst, a distinctly inferior amateur playwright of the London Play Actors' experimental stage brand. He is, in general, an imitator: in "The Bonds of Interest" of the methods of Giacosa, in certain of his other satires of the methods of Shaw (much diluted), in "La Malquerida" of the methods of Guiméra, in "Sacrifice" and "The Victor Soul" of the methods of Lavedan and

French dramatists of his stripe, in "The Evil Doers of Good" of the methods of the German satirical comedy school that sprang to life in the wake of Shaw. . . . He writes nimbly, but he writes other men's ideas.

§ 30

The Spanish.—The modern Spaniards may be the great artistic people their enthusiastic champions assure me they are, but the lugubrious fact remains that in all their vast literature I have thus far found only one book ("The Three Cornered Hat") that I could read with any interest and only one play ("El Gran Galeoto") that I could sit through without snoring. They have not in the last two decades produced a single painting that has struck me as beautiful, nor a single piece of music, nor a single dish of food, nor a single woman.

§ 31

The Religious Spectacle.—The so-called religious spectacle has always seemed to me to be as ill-suited to the stage as the hoochie-coochie would be to the altar. The theatre is no more properly the place for a pious theological exhibition than the church is for an A. H. Woods' bedroom farce. In the theatre—an institution devoted rightly to wit,

gaiety, colour, romance, passion, and the drama that is acutely life—the religious play is as out of place as a tambourine in Grieg's "Einsame." One doesn't go to the theatre for such things any more than one goes to a circus for satire, or to a prayer-meeting for zebras.

§ 32

An Actors' Strike.[1]—The strike of the semi-Salvinis and demi-Duses against the Times Square Stanislavskis and half-fare Reinhardts is at its height. The sidewalk in front of the Hotel Astor is thick with magnificently haberdashered mimes—Solomon on a Saturday was not like one of these—who swear that they will rather play in an actors' revival of Charles Rann Kennedy's "The Army with Banners" and starve to death than surrender their rights to the managers. And the inside of the Hotel Astor is thick with the latter who, between mouthsful of *tagesuppe* and *kartoffelpurée,* swear in turn that they will rather shut up their show houses for good and all than surrender their rights to the actors. In the Lexington Avenue Opera House thousands of the pantaloons, resplendent in venerable "Second Mrs. Tanqueray" dress suits and erstwhile "Lady Windermere" décolletés, are

[1] Written while the performance was on.

nightly cheering themselves hoarse over Brandon Tynan's declamation of a paraphrase of Mark Antony's oration in which Abe Erlanger serves as Brutus and Jake Shubert as Cassius. "For Brutus is an honourable man; so are they all, all honourable men!" booms the Tynan atop a table, his betalcumed bosom protruding passionately from a white croquet shirt, his arms lifted in the air after the fashion of a Starving Roumania poster; whereat the house gives Abe and Jake the vociferous boo.

Downtown, while this is going on, the managers are busily receiving bevies of newspaper reporters in a room in the Fitzgerald Building well stocked with Pinch Bottle and free passes to the next play that Thomas Dixon writes, and are issuing pronunciamentos in which Francis Wilson, president of the actors' union, is thrice daily compared with the Kaiser, and Frank Gillmore, executive secretary, with Von Tirpitz. Several times every forenoon the actors are sending out from their headquarters in Forty-fifth Street West broadsides alleging in behalf of their cause that several years ago a certain theatrical manager took a trip to Atlantic City with a chorus girl and, on the fifth day of their joint sojourn at the St. Trayborough, seduced the poor girl without her permission; that another manager last season cruelly discharged without reimbursement an actor who, after he had magnanimously re-

hearsed four long weeks for nothing, didn't know his part; and that still another manager was in the habit of making chorus girls pay for the silk stockings which they wore in his productions, and on Sundays. Each of these broadsides is met promptly by a broadside from the managers' headquarters in Forty-second Street West alleging in behalf of *their* cause that the actors are trying to throttle Art by bumptiously demanding that if a contract to play the rôle of Count de Roquefort calls for seventy-five dollars a week the weekly pay envelope has to contain more than seventy-four dollars and a quarter; and that the actors, in striking, are selfishly sucking the very life blood out of the theatre as an institution by closing such of the managers' dramatic masterpieces as "Who Killed Waldo Piffle?" and "One Bed for Two," and such works of operatic art as "Goo-Goo Gertie" and "The Platitudes of 1919."

Ethel Barrymore (who is engaged prospectively to appear in Zoë Akins' "Déclassée" and who, if the lay-off lasts, can meanwhile have at a motion picture offer for a fat sum) and Lionel Barrymore (who is not scheduled to reopen in "The Jest" for another month and who is meanwhile grabbing some easy money on the side by doing "The Copperhead" for the movies) are altruistically and with princely ado sacrificing the large theatrical salaries

they are not yet due to draw by appearing for nothing at actors' benefit performances. Barney Bernard, whose new play by the Messrs. Glass and Goodman (in all probability destined to be a financial success) is not yet quite ready, and other of his colleagues in similarly soft situations are strutting martyr-like before the mob of poor fool actors who can't get jobs strike or no strike, who bravely and pitiably live out their days year on year in cheap lodging-houses hoping against hope, and who presently are led goatlike to dream of a Utopia whereof, even if it is realized, they will be non-resident members. But if there is hypocrisy on the side of the actors, there is hypocrisy no less on the side of the managers. Belasco, indefatigable producer of such boodle-nibblers as "Dark Rosaleen," "Daddies," "Polly with a Past," etc., eloquently addresses the actors "as one artist to another." Erlanger, who in the past has made a practice of cutting from his theatre lists any critic whose honestly expressed opinions he has not at the moment happened to find sufficiently charged with admiration of Erlanger, addresses the public with such pretty words as "fairness," "open-mindedness" and "justice" . . .

By the time these pages get into print the whole shenanigan will have long been settled; the Lambs' Club grill-room will again be the great joint intellec-

tual forum of manager and actor; all the fifth-rate plays will again be playing with all the fifth-rate actors; the room in the St. Trayborough will again be amicably occupied by the manager and the chorus girl; and these words will seem hoary indeed. But as I write them, the wry absurdity of the strike from both the side of the actor and the side of the manager noses itself out of the hash so lucidly that I cannot refrain from transcribing it to paper. This absurdity wears several gaudy masks.

In the first place, the actors' claims and demands against the managers seem to be sound. But, also in the first place, so do the claims and demands of the managers against the actors. The fault lies, in the former instance, not with the claims and demands, but with the actors who advance them. The fault lies, in the latter instance, not with the answers to these claims and demands, but with the managers who make those answers. What are just claims and demands on the part of an actor like Arnold Daly or an actress like Miss Barrymore, say, become unjust claims and demands on the part of an actor like Frank Gillmore, say, or an actress like Katherine Kaelred. The notion that a bad actor deserves the same consideration from a manager as a good actor—a typical specimen of the current actor logic—is akin to the notion that Buddie, the Castles' coon drummer, and Giacomo Puccini ought to

share the same toothbrush. But, on the other hand, the notion that a bad actor does not deserve the same consideration from a manager as a good actor—when the notion is vouchsafed by the managers—falls to pieces because of the incapability of half the managers to tell a good actor from a bad actor.

The trouble, plainly enough, is not with the actor side alone—but with both sides. And this trouble lies, as always it lies, in the union theory. The actors' union, or Actors' Equity Association as it is named, becomes a ridiculous union the moment one reads that its purpose is to seek equity alike for a talented actress like Miss Barrymore and a proportionately inexpert actress like Miss Hazel Dawn. And the managers' union, or Producing Managers' Association, becomes not much less ridiculous a union the moment one reads that an artistic producing member like Arthur Hopkins is brought to an equal level in dialectic and commercial council with a certain fellow member or so whom history makes it unnecessary to name. Fights are often won by unions, but true and equal justice rarely. The object of a trades-union, according to the young college professors who write for the uplift weeklies, is to protect its members against the inordinate demands and tyrannies of organized capital. This is bosh. The sole object of a trades-union is to protect its members against the righteous wrath of a

swindled and outraged public. A union workman is simply one who is entitled to his pay no matter how badly he does his work. He may botch it, he may skimp it, he may neglect it altogether—but still he must be paid in full. If he is penalized for his incompetence and dishonesty, if the money that he has not earned is withheld from him, then all the other incompetents in his union join him in a strike, and drag the few competents with them. This is the only genuine purpose of unionism—to protect the bad workman, to make him as secure as the good workman, to rob the employer of his just dues. No union in history has ever expelled a single workman on the ground that he was a shirker and a fraud. But every union, at one time or another, has called a strike to *protect* the shirker and the fraud—to make his job secure, to prevent whoever has to pay him from forcing honest work out of him. . . . What have the unions ever done to keep the raisins in their vast pound-cakes of incompetence, backsliding and tyranny? When will they stop penalizing honest and competent workmen and begin penalizing loafers and fakers?

Any union of persons engaged in the arts, however lowly the art in which they are engaged, provides an especial trouser for the slapstick. An actors' union, a producers' union, a writers' union —each is meat for the squirt bottle. Take my

own case, for instance. For many years I have paid dues to a writers' union—The Authors' League of America, as it is called. I have never attended a meeting; I have never cast a vote or sat in at a conference; yet I have remained a member and sent in my annual cheque out of sheer curiosity to see just what an Authors' Union meant or didn't mean, did do or didn't do. What it is going to mean and what it is doing to do, I don't know. But what it has meant and has done thus far I in a measure do know. I do not follow this writers' union activities very closely—I am too busy writing—but, from what I have observed, its leading accomplishments during the years that I have belonged to it would seem to have consisted chiefly in giving a one dollar banquet at Sherry's for six dollars, in warning its members not to have any dealings with some book agent in Maryland about whom no one had even so much as heard, in trying to make the theatrical managers assign to the playwrights all moving picture rights (plainly an unfair demand and one that no equable writer would ask of his producer), in trying to get a few reluctant dollars out of *Pearson's Magazine* for one of its members, in arguing that plot is more important to literature than style, and in attempting to draw up a uniform contract with publishers that would make a member like myself, for example, get just as much out of the publisher as a member

like George Ade who deserves five times as much.

I have been writing and publishing for almost sixteen years. No magazine editor, no publisher, no moving picture company, no theatrical manager, has ever swindled me. I have always been treated politely; I have always been paid what was due me; sometimes I have been paid considerably more than was soundly due me. On one occasion a publisher delayed paying me my royalties, but even before I thought of the matter he wrote me a letter telling me that he was temporarily hard up and would pay me immediately he got on his feet again. He did, in full, and with an accompanying letter so thoroughly decent that it is one of the very few I have ever saved. I am the co-editor of a monthly magazine. In the five years I have occupied the position, out of more than three thousand writers with whom the magazine has had dealings only one has alleged that I treated him unfairly. He spoke the truth. He was a shirker, a botcher, a nuisance—and I could get rid of him in no other way. The man who can do his work, I have found, is always treated fairly, always well. The man who can't, joins unions. And this is why I side with the managers, for all their current idiotic protective association, or union, against the actors. For the managers' union would never have been had the actors' union not made it necessary. It is less a union than a union against a

union. The manufacturers of rope have merely banded themselves together against the lynchers.

A decade and one half ago I entered upon my professional attendance upon the American theatre. I began, of course, like all young men fresh from the university, with an eye suspiciously narrowed at the managers. Had I not read countless articles attesting to the dire ruin wrought by the Syndicate? Had I not read with sophomoric ire how poor Mrs. Fiske had been compelled to play Ibsen in a mule stable in Peoria, and how poor Mr. Belasco had been driven to produce one of his famous art works in a converted privy in Berea, Ohio? And had I not seen in *Life* countless pictures of long-nosed Jews, bristling with diamonds, choking fair virgins labelled Drama and Art? But as the years slowly rolled along, and as poor abused Mrs. Fiske began again with obvious relish to break spaghetti with the Frohmans and as poor abused Mr. Belasco began with no less patent zest and appetite to share Klaw and Erlanger's lavish chow, I began to experience doubts and look around a bit. Something must be wrong somewhere. Mrs. Fiske was no fool; Mr. Belasco was no fool. And, looking around a bit, I came to the reluctant conclusion that, for all the cruel episode of the Peoria mule villa and the even more cruel episode of the converted Berea unmentionable, these men who were

managing the affairs of the American theatre—though their faces were none too lovely nor their noses too Grecian—must be doing the job at least better than anyone else at the time could do it. Though their tactics were Prussian, they were yet getting the theatre somewhere, somewhere off the jerkwater line of impracticable sentimentality on which it had until then, freight-car like, been shunted—somewhere nearer the destination where in the days to come other managers than they, and other producers than they, might take it over, and make it finer, and bring it to a more beautiful flower. These men, though some of them were uncouth and some not gracious of manner, were yet the pioneers of the American theatre of today, the theatre that was nursed and spanked, financed and browbeaten, loved and hated maybe, by parents who, however like step-parents, were its parents still. And it was they who made it ready—a healthy and eager adolescent—for the finer love, the finer understanding, and the finer ideals of the newer and younger American producers of today.

Erlanger, for all the brazen way in which he did it, and for all the brazen manner in which he went about it, has done more for the American theatre as a sound institution than any five Augustin Dalys or any five thousand members of the Actors' Equity Association. (The Molières must have their Louis,

the Alexeieffs their Nyemirovitch-Dantchenkos, even the Washington Square Players their Otto Kahns.) And the Shuberts, by fighting Erlanger, beating him and rectifying his blunders, have done still more. All the actors in America since 1850 have done not one-tenth for the American theatre that Charles Frohman did, and not one-fiftieth what young Hopkins has done. With a few exceptions like Faversham, Ditrichstein, Daly, et al., who are themselves partly managers, the average actor who makes demands of a manager (also with a few exceptions) occupies a position analogous to the monkey who makes demands of the organ grinder. The demands may be just, but they are not particularly intelligible.

In the same decade and one half that I have been giving the Chinese eye to the work of the managers, I have also been giving the eye to the actors. For every actor who has given evidence of competence and resolve, for every actor who has given evidence that the honour of his profession and of his craft was close to his heart and to his conscience, I have seen a hundred actors who gave no evidence of knowing even the essentials of their trade, a hundred the goal of whose art was a big salary, a full-page photograph in the Sunday supplement of the *Morning Telegraph* and a good notice from the late Acton Davies or the later Alan Dale. The average

actor, as I have observed him over slightly more than fifteen years of professional theatregoing, is, my friends, a joke. To demand commercial justice for such a serio-comic—the demand of the Actors' Equity Association—is to demand an eternal commercial justice alike for the man who is worth his pay and the man who isn't. A few weeks ago, I made the mistake of quoting the actors' union's claim to be for a maximum of two weeks of free rehearsal. I am given to understand that the maximum is set at double that number of weeks. This, on the actors' part, is more than fair, *i. e.*, if they who advance the maximum are actors. A competent actor, I believe, should be paid not after two weeks of rehearsals, nor after four weeks of rehearsals, but from the very first day that a play is put into rehearsal. An incompetent actor, I also believe, should not receive a cent until the play opens, whether he has had to rehearse two weeks, or four weeks, or four years. If the Actors' Equity Association will thus separate the thoroughbreds from the plugs, I shall transfer to it a large measure of my sympathy for the managers and, if called upon, will volunteer to appear at its benefit performances and, assisted by Mencken do gratis, with Huneker at the piano, our celebrated and very trig clog. But so long as the Actors' Equity Association, a union of unsuccessful business men, seeks under

cover of high-sounding but perfectly empty art whiffle to get the better of the Producing Managers' Association, a union of successful business men who in the mass make no pretence to art but confine themselves strictly to business, my sympathy will remain with the managers. The leaders and chief spokesmen of the Actors' Equity Association are (1) a third-rate music show clown, (2) a third-rate actor of second-rate straight rôles, and (3) a performer the bulk of whose more recent professional activity has been devoted to playing the rôle of butler in Rialto-made greenhorn-grabbers. The leaders and chief spokesmen of the Producing Managers' Association, on the other hand, are (1) David Belasco who, for all his droll Broadway Athenianism, has yet done some fine things splendidly and beautifully; (2) Arthur Hopkins, who has done more for a newer and better native stage than any one else in America; and (3) George M. Cohan, who has not only on occasion given Hopkins the money to carry on his work; who, whatever the altitude of his own artistic aims, has always worked unfailingly for the artistic aims of others; and who himself, by making the theatre popular, has given it an added vitality and an added good fortune.

As between such camps, I stand with the latter. And this is where every critic of the theatre should stand. The question is not one of dramatic art,

but one of dramatic finance. And fair finance and incompetent labour should not go together. That they do in the United States, all too commonly, doesn't mean that it is right that they should. The just cause of one good actor does not make just the unjust cause of two bad actors. If the actors get together, good and bad alike, and strike for good plays, I'll be with them. If they get together and strike for competent direction, I'll be with them. If they get together and strike for any single thing that will better the American theatre, I'll be with them. But when, as now, they get together, good and bad alike, and strike for money that they do not, in nine cases out of ten, deserve; when, as now, they shoddily enlist on their side, and cause also to strike, a union of stagehands who regard the setting of the scenes of a production like "Chu Chin Chow" a herculean feat and have to be given bonuses by the producer if they contrive to get through the première without botching things; when, as now, they further cheapen themselves by dragging after them the union of fifth-rate fiddlers and flute tooters who pass for musicians—when they do these things I have the same contempt for them that I should have for the managers were they to strike against the actors and ally on their side the same forces.

The actor, lifted by these very managers from the clerk salaries of Stetson's and Daly's day to the rail-

road president salaries of this day, has been ruined by money. Instead of giving him more money, the manager with the best interests of the theatre at heart should see that he gets less. In other days the actor, paid a fair wage, devoted himself to his art and made something of himself. Today, paid out of all proportion to his worth, he joins clubs, buys himself a yellow and purple automobile, gets up dances at the Ritz, lives on Long Island and looks on his acting as a mere means of keeping rich without working. The time that an actor of yesterday devoted to study, the overpaid actor of today devotes to spending his surplus funds. The only first-rate acting in the American theatre of the present day is the acting that has come down to it, over the bridge of the years, from the underpaid stock companies.

As I have said before, the whole matter will long have been settled by the time this gets into print. Even as I write, there are harbingers of peace. But whichever side wins, the actors will have been in the wrong. An artist never strikes. He leaves such things to plumbers and streetsweeps.

§ 33

The Whimsical Ringling.—Each successive play of J. M. Barrie is, like each successive trip to the

circus, more and more of a disappointment. The same familiar freaks, with never a new one; the same familiar clown tricks, with never a fresh one; the same familiar grotesque assortment of animals; the same familiar historical pageant with the same old red-nosed Nero in the white nightshirt seated in the high gilt chair and receiving the homage of the quondam trapeze performers and bare-back riders figged out in togas. Barrie has been repeating himself now for eight years, sending his venerable whimsicalities through the same old hoops and jumping his grown shaggy tender-charm over the same old barrels.

§ 34

Sic Semper Mysticus.—The latest "mystic" to blow up and go off is the Rev. Dr. Maurice Maeterlinck. For twenty years, by the crafty hocus-pocus of living in a remote ruined castle, consorting with the birds, the bees and the butterflies, sending out photographs of a sad-eyed, ascetic and beatified patriarch, and writing pieces about the After Life on birch bark, the Rev. Dr. contrived to have himself viewed by the thitherward yokelry as a saintish and eerie creature. For twenty years. But mysticism is a hard job, and it grows very tiresome. So one day the Rev. Dr. decided to take a

littlé time off among the mortals. Heathen America would be the scene of his visitation. Presently he came, in the wake of a great white dazzling celestial light, and the lowly peoples bethought them that it was but meet they bend the knee in awe, in veneration and in self-abasement. But before bending the knee for good, the lowly jakes thought that for once they'd take a look at one of their beloved mystics. They took it. And what they beheld was a vain old gentleman in a red tie and pearl-gray spats with a French cutie on his arm. And then they took another look. And what they beheld further was the old gentleman one night clapping his hands for Ethel Barrymore in the Empire Theatre and the next keeping time with his foot to the jazzy tunes of a musical comedy at the New Amsterdam. And they took then still other looks. And now they beheld the old gentleman making goo-goo eyes at Mary Garden in the green-room of the Lexington Avenue Opera House, and fighting with the manager of a lecture bureau for a bigger percentage of his box-office haul, and stealing a look at the comely flappers on Fifth Avenue, and signing a contract with Samuel Goldfish to write scenarios out in Los Angeles for the moving pictures, and gazing up in rapt wonder at the Singer Building, and sticking three slabs of butter into the gizzard of a single baked potato. And, beholding, the jakes said "Oh

hell, Ambrose" . . . and turned their devotions to Sir Oliver Lodge.

§ 35

On Character Acting.—Among critics of the drama there exists a sorry confusion in the matter of what is called character acting. An actor makes a great success of the rôle of Abraham Lincoln in a play of that name by an English poet. He is hailed a fine character actor. Yet he is nothing of the sort. He is, instead, a fine impersonator. This difference between character acting and impersonation the critics seldom ponder. One is not the other. The difference between them is the difference between Leo Ditrichstein's fine interpretation of the rôle of the roué in Lavedan's "Marquis de Priola" and Charles Winninger's fine impersonation of Leo Ditrichstein and his fine interpretation.

§ 36

Zoë Akins.—Zoë Akins is one of the few interesting young women writing for the native stage. Her play, "Papa," to which I have already twice referred, is perhaps the best thing of its eccentric kind in the theatrical writing of our day. I know of nothing in Europe to equal it: not even Schnitzler has a suaver piece of work to his credit. It is

an amazing composition to have come from an American hand, and that the hand that conceived and executed it should have been born in the suburbs of the brewery town of St. Louis, Mo., only deepens the mystery of the jokes sometimes perpetrated by the Divine Joe Miller. It is, in essence, a play as Viennese as the Prater and yet it is neither imitative nor hybrid. Unmercifully ridiculed by the reviewers for the New York gazettes upon its local presentation, "Papa" surpasses in imagination, fancy, style and grotesque humour nine-tenths of the plays written by Americans since Americans began writing for the theatre. And "Déclassée," the latest play by its author, while an absurdly inferior work on all counts, still bears marks of the uncommon Akins mind.

This mind is disillusioned, genteel, droll. Now and again, true enough, it plays somewhat brashly with the hokums of life and the show-shop, but it reveals in the main a point of view grounded upon a nice digestion of experience, of training, and of literature. In "Déclassée" we have the story of an Englishwoman of title who, having done with her drunken husband, leaves the circle of her British friends and finds herself eventually sinking lower and lower in the social scale. Coming at length to America, she falls in with a dowdy lot, chief of whom—and perhaps most honourable of whom—is

a millionaire ex-newsboy who seeks to make her his mistress. (The scenes between these two characters are the best in the play. They are well-written, compelling, honest "theatre.") The woman, still holding her heart high—a heart that longs again for a sight of England and the old friends—philosophically rejects the proposal, only to find it converted into a proposal of marriage. The final note of the play is one of tragedy. Death comes in the form of a skidding taxicab, and the déclassée Lady Helen Haden passes from the scene with the man who originally caused her undoing kneeling humbly beside her and with the déclassé man who wished to marry her looking on through his tears.

A somewhat seedy Laura Libbey *conte*, reading it over in the gaunt outline. A distillation of the venerable Pinero juices. But handled by the Akins girl with force, skill and a sound flavour of romance. Here and there the playwright has descended to the worn tricks of the stage; here and there she has perfumed the auditorium with the joss of the jazbos of commerce; yet on the whole her play, for all its intrinsic vacuity and lack of artistic bulk, is written so much more adroitly than the American-made plays one is accustomed to see, it is comparatively so sophisticated, and it is related with so agreeable a reticence, that it lifts itself high

above the wares of the Broadway slop-jar. The characters of Lady Helen and the former newsboy are dexterously imagined and executed. And the characters of the millionaire's actress inamorata and the young man who cheats at cards and brings about the final separation of the Englishwoman and her husband are drawn with a but slightly less sharp pen. As I have said, the play is not to be compared with "Papa": one is a rhinestone, the other a ruby. Yet with all its perfectly obvious defects—its florid sentimentality, its attempt at compromise with the box-office and its hooching of situation effects—it still provides a further evidence of the peculiar talent of the young woman who devised it. Let this Akins girl remain the independent artist of "Papa," the artist uncontaminated by the devastating boll-weevils of Broadway, and she will produce work of a quality uncommon to our stage. Let her become inflamed with the success of "Déclassée" and pursue the more popular species of writing—I begin, as I have said, to detect unmistakable symptoms of the diabetes—and she will ruin as engaging a potentiality as the curtain of an American stage has lifted upon.

§ 37

Humour.—The truth in an intoxicated condition.

§ 38

The War Play.—The so-called war play is generally a sour thing. It is customarily manufactured in one of three ways. The first is to take the old triangle plot, put the hero in the home military uniform and the villain in the uniform of the enemy, and add one loud and very ornate speech on patriotism and one equally loud and even more ornate speech on the beauty and glory of the flag of the particular country for whose yokels the play is designed. The second is to take one of the old 10-20-30 melodramas like "Chinatown Charlie," change all the Chinese into spies in the employ of the Wilhelmstrasse, rename the opium joint scene "a dug-out somewhere in France," and direct several stage hands periodically to pound upon as many bass-drums in the wings by way of suggesting a bombardment of the Rheims cathedral. And the third and last is to take the venerable story of Virginia Calhoun, the proud Southern beauty, and Captain Percival Telfair, U. S. A.—the story of Virginia's rejection of Telfair's ardent suit because you-all is a Yank and ma haht beats only foh Dixie —and change the scene from Richmond to whatever country the most recent war happens to have occurred in.

§ 39

The Deaf and Dumb Menace.—More than any other force, more than any other ten forces all compact, have the moving pictures in the last half dozen years succeeded brilliantly in reducing further the taste, the sense and the general culture of the American nation. Like a thundering flood of bilge and scum, the flapdoodle of the films has swept over the country carrying before it what seeds of perception were sprouting, however faintly, among our lesser peoples. And today the cinema, ranking the fourth industry in the States, proudly views the havoc it has wrought and turns its eyes to new Belgiums.

Controlled in the overwhelming main by the most ignorant social outcasts, by the spawn of push-cart immigration, by hereditary toothpick suckers, soup coloraturas and six-day sock wearers, controlled in the mass by men of a complete anæsthesia to everything fine and everything earnest and everything potentially dollarless, the moving pictures—the physic of the proletariat—have revealed themselves the most effective carriers of idiocy that the civilized world has known. Here in America, their fortress, they have cheapened a national taste, already cheap, to a point where cheapness can seem to go no further. They have lurked near school-

houses and seduced the impressionable minds of children. They have crawled up alleys and side-streets and for thirty pieces of copper have sold youth into æsthetic corruption. They have gagged the mouths of almost every newspaper in America with a rich advertising revenue: if there is a newspaper in the land that has the honour and respectability to call the moving pictures by their right name, I haven't heard of it. They have bought literature and converted it, by their own peculiar and esoteric magic, into rubbish. They have bought imaginative actors and converted them into facemakers and mechanical dolls. They have bought reputable authors and dramatists and have converted them into shamefaced hacks. They have elected for their editors and writers the most obscure and talentless failures of journalism and the tawdry periodicals. They have enlisted as their directors, with a few reputable exceptions, an imposing array of ex-stage butlers, assistant stage managers of tank town troupes, discharged pantaloons, and the riff-raff of Broadway street corners. And presently they sweep their wet tongue across the American theatre.

The moving picture organizations will—unless a miracle intervenes—soon or late get a strangle hold on the native theatre. Some months since this hold was already exhibiting its choking power.

Now that grip is closing in . . . one hears, faintly, the rattles. And save, as I say, a miracle stop it, there will shortly be not more than three or four freemen in the American theatre, not more than three or four men who will be able, or who will be permitted, to produce a play not designed for subsequent film use, not more than three or four men who will be the proud possessors of their own consciences, their own souls, and their own integrity. And to these men the present theatres will, save in isolated instances, be closed.

Day by day the facts leak out. Day by day comes the news that now this theatre and now that has been bought in by the art maggots. The pest spreads through the larger cities of all America, the keystones of the native theatre. The theatres of the late Charles Frohman, the theatres of the Shuberts, certain of the theatres of Klaw and Erlanger, and any number of theatres called by the name "independent" are already either gobbled up, or are about to be gobbled up. In New York, Philadelphia, Boston, Chicago, the one-night stands, the situation wears the same face. And gradually the one chance that the American drama had to redeem and to glorify itself, gradually the one chance it had, after these many struggled and arduous years, to assert itself for the best there was in it—gradually, but unmistakably and subversively, that one

chance trembles hazardously in the balance. For without theatres in New York and the larger cities this one chance will not longer be privileged the kind of man who, indifferent to the oily shekels of the Zukors, the Selznicks and the Goldfishes, dares write the drama he feels and the kind of man who, placing his pride and his honour above the thirty percent bonds of some Celluloid Mines Co., Inc., dares give the former a fair and fearless field.

There are three or four men who are standing bravely, backs to the wall, to stem the garbage flood. Hopkins is one of these. Hopkins would, of course, be one of these. Belasco is another. So is Edgar Selwyn, despite his holdings in the Goldwyn company. And so, they tell me, are Samuel Harris and Erlanger. But the job of these men is not going to be an easy job. Aligned against them is the full and deadly artillery of the greatest horde of artistic barbarians our day in this world has known. And every cannon spewing the plains is rammed to the nozzle with Wall Street and Wilmington, Delaware, gold. Wall Street is behind the Famous Players-Lasky outfit with its war-made millions. And every half-ounce of DuPont powder that shot a piece of lead into the bowels of a German is now, converted into specie, behind the Goldwyn pack to shoot a piece of lead into the bowels of the American drama. No, the defenders of the

theatre will have no easy time of it. They will have to fight, beg, borrow, steal and implore for stages to show any play of theirs above the quality of screen dung. They will be beset by alluring bribes—and man, as he grows older, grows, alas, weak and human. They will—when the moving picture people begin chloroforming the newspapers with bigger and bigger advertisements—have to weather the newspapers' inattention and neglect, and perhaps even cunning hostility. They will, maybe not all of them, but some, eventually surrender.

But, one hears the birdies say, even under moving picture control will the theatres be worse pifflemills than they are today? The answer, gentlemen, is simple. They will. The owners, managers and producers of our so-called commercial theatre at the present time may not be Corinthians of the highest carat, but they are of a class infinitely superior to the controllers of the motion picture industry. They are more hospitable men; they are artistically more venturesome men; they are men in whom burn, albeit at times almost indiscernibly, the flickering fires of dramatic faith. You will be hard put to it, my optimistic hearties, to find such men in the movie trade. These latter are mush merchants pure and simple. Show me *one* who would willingly, proudly, take a chance on

anything that didn't promise a fifty percent profit, and I'll roll a wienerwurst with a mustard ladle from Arrowhead Inn to Eberlin's. Show me *two*, and I'll eat the wurst at the end of the trip.

But millions are not the only thing that the independent producer will have to fight. The moving picture Pluto purveyors, say what you will against them, are clever machinators, and they will contend against the rebels with succulent guiles. These guiles will be poised indirectly at the rebels, and more directly at the public and the press. It will not do, they will be well aware, to give themselves and their shoddy game too clearly away. There will be need of some hocus-pocus. And the resulting tactic has already been illustrated. Lest the public decline to be hornswoggled into laying out $2.75 to see a dramatic abortion that, once it gets a Broadway name, may be seen on the screen for twenty-seven cents, the film Machiavellis must indulge themselves in some more or less sly chicane. Unpalatable though it be, they must now and again cover up their tracks by interrupting the drivel procession momentarily with a "literary" opus and so throw the public and newspaper reviewers off the scent. And thus every two dozen dime-novel detective reboilings, melodramatic yokel-yankers and sentimental slops will be relieved, for purposes of deception, with some "classy stuff" by Brieux, Ar-

nold Bennett and other such "literary guys." As I say, we have already had an illustration of the procedure. And what is more, as I have also implied, it will probably work. The public will be fooled more adroitly than the public has ever been fooled before, and the newspaper reviewers will be brought to swallow the two dozen embryonic film-cheeses under the delusion that, for immediate want of better dramatic material, they are merely makeshifts to pave the way for finer things. The scheme, to repeat, is approximately as opaque as a plate-glass shop window, but—again to repeat—it will work like a cake of yeast.

In a year or two, save some mysterious Jeanne d'Arc come to the rescue, the American drama will be dictated to not by the Belascos with all their faults, but by the Marcus Loews with all theirs. The odds, even mindful of innumerable "Little Ladies in Blue" and "Son-Daughters," need no posting. They are as clear as West 192nd Street. Under the new régime, one of the few uncontaminated producers will have to fight for bookings against the gang within the fold. If one of the latter has a piece of tripe the future Los Angeles value of which is plain, and one of the former a play by Hauptmann, Phillips or Galsworthy, it is needless to guess which will get the coveted theatre. This too, and even this early, we have already seen

demonstrated. As I write, a "play" produced by one of the henchmen of the moving picture gobbos has been quickly booked into New York while the respectable effort of an independent producer, the screen properties of which are practically nil, is being left to starve in the expensive, experimental hinterland. The future screen spew must get its Broadway imprimatur at all hazards!

A few direct questions, under oath, to the anticipated protestations of the movie gentry:

1. In control of the theatre, would you have produced Tarkington's "Clarence" and Butler's "Mamma's Affair," the two best pieces of comic writing of the last season? Would these plays not have impressed you, *from preliminary manuscript reading*, as being not particularly well suited to the screen, and hence not safe theatrical investments?

2. In control of the theatre, would you, *from preliminary manuscript reading*, ever have produced such debatable moving picture material as Shaw's "Great Catherine" or "Cæsar and Cleopatra," as Pinero's "Thunderbolt" and "Preserving Mr. Panmure" and "Wife Without a Smile," as Galsworthy's "Strife," as Brieux's "Incubus," as Chesterton's "Magic," as Molnar's "Where Ignorance is Bliss," as Bahr's "The Master," as Akins'

"Papa," as J. O. Francis' "Change," as Rubinstein's "Consequences," as Barrie's "The Legend of Leonora," as Davies' "The Mollusc," as Wilde's "Importance of Being Earnest," as Rostand's "Chantecler," as Schnitzler's "Anatol," as Githa Sowerby's "Rutherford and Son," as Houghton's "Hindle Wakes," as Robinson's "Patriots" and "The Lost Leader," as Stephen Phillips' "Herod"? If, under oath, your answer is yes, then I'll roll that wienerwurst all the way back again. Yet all these plays, and many more like them, have been produced under our late commercial managerial system.

3. In control of the theatre, finally, would you—other things being equal—give precedence in booking to a producer of William Shakespeare, or to a producer of Elmer Reizenstein?

I address you, gentlemen, in the matter impersonally. You have been more than liberal to me in your offers for certain of my own published writings, though I have felt—and, as subsequent events proved, felt rightly—that you have erred sadly in imagining my kind of work the sort of thing suited to your peculiar purposes. You are currently showing upon the screen, and paying well and promptly for, certain epigrammatic non-picture material from the very magazine I own stock

in. For all the wails I have heard against you, you have—save in one instance—never been other than fair in your dealings with any publisher or any magazine or any writer with whom, as editor and writer, I have come into contact. But, gentlemen, you would buy a soul, or sell one, for a nickel. You have not the slightest trace of literary judgment, not the slightest trace of dramatic judgment, not the slightest trace of honourable theatrical judgment. You are, the most of you, avowedly ignorant, narrow, vainglorious and illiterate men. Stick to your lasts, and leave the theatre alone. Go on with your deaf and dumb art; go on corrupting the boobery; go on making your millions; go on with your traffic in magnificent cowboys and hip-rolling vampires and bouncing golden curls—but leave what is left of the American theatre.

§ 40

Masefield, the Dramatist.—Masefield's "Tragedy of Nan" is a distinguished piece of dramatic writing but, God forgive me, I find it very boresome stuff in the theatre. I have seen it played twice and each time, though my head has impressively warned and chided the rest of me, I have experienced difficulty in keeping my attention where it should have been. Why, I don't exactly

know. Each one of us, I suppose, has his inexplicable artistic inhibitions. They are idiotic, undoubtedly, but there they are. Personally, Masefield—for all my critical appreciation of him, for all my regard for certain of his achievements in dramatic writing—fails to warm me once I get into a seat before him. I know, even then, that he is an artist; but somehow I don't seem to give a hang. Hermann Heijermans very often has the same effect upon me. So, in art, has Rubens; so, in music, frequently Schumann; and so, in literature, Catulle Mendès. As I say, don't ask me why. I don't know.

§ 41

The Occult Play.—In the affecting tournaments in commercial sentiment known as occult plays, the occult quality is most often translated to the audience (1) by causing the leading lady periodically to dash off the stage with one hand already tugging at the hinter hooks and eyes and to reappear a few moments later—with visible difficulty suppressing her quick breathing—as the re-costumed, white spotlighted ghost of the dead mother or fiancée whom she resembles; (2) by a prologue wherein the ghosts of two mothers, dressed by Bendel, stand on a dimly lighted stage and, in the accepted stomach-ache ghost voice, philosophize wistfully over

their living children; or (3) by bringing the leading man suddenly to stop in his effort to crack a safe, to stare wide-eyed and open-mouthed at the balcony, to whisper tensely, "Mother, I hear you, I hear you!" and to let his jimmy fall from his hand, with a loud bang, upon the floor.

§ 42

Florenz Ziegfeld.—The difference between Florenz Ziegfeld and his imitators is illuminatingly revealed in a comparison of one of the Ziegfeld roof revues with such a show as John Murray Anderson's "What's In a Name?" This difference is not a matter of costumes—Anderson's are as beautiful as Ziegfeld's; it is not a matter of lighting—Anderson's lighting is, if anything, better than Ziegfeld's; it is not a matter of wit or humour or music—there is little if any wit or humour or music in the exhibitions of either the one or the other; it is not a matter of scenery—Anderson's is often as attractive as Ziegfeld's. It is, rather, that the touch of Ziegfield is the touch of an artist, whereas the touch of such a man as Anderson is the touch of a showman. It is this touch of Ziegfeld's that takes a bag of canvas, costumes, lights and girls and converts the whole, with an unerring instinct for form, into something of fluid light, fluid

colour, and fluid beauty. It is this lack of touch that, in the instance of the Andersons, brings from the same bag a sometimes beautiful but always chaotic, and never fluid, vaudeville show.

It is only recently that Ziegfeld has been recognized for the man he is. In a theatre that holds David Belasco, Augustus Thomas and Nance O'Neil to be in their several ways great artists, it is not unnatural that a genuine theatrical artist, an artist of penetrating taste, fine feeling and delicate perception, should be overlooked. And not merely overlooked, but shouldered aside, at the mere thought of him, with breezy derision. And so it came about that this Ziegfeld, save for the clear vision of the few who observed in him the temperament and execution of the real craftsman of the theatre, was slow to be recognized for the fine skill that is his. It is, of course, as difficult for the average American theatregoer, who habitually confuses the Swiss cheese with the mustard, to persuade himself that an artist and a music show may in any way be related as it is for him to recognize the artist in a man who, like George Ade, writes in slang or in one who, like Montague Glass, writes mere magazine stories about the low-comedy creatures of the cloak and suit trade.

There is no producer in the world today who, in his field, in any degree approaches to this Zieg-

feld. I have sat under them all. Out of the vulgar leg-show, Ziegfeld has fashioned a thing of grace and beauty, of loveliness and charm. He knows colours as a painter knows colours; he knows form; he knows quality and mood. He has lifted, with sensitive skill, a thing that was mere food for smirking baldheads and downy college boys out of its low estate and into a thing of symmetry and bloom. To appreciate what he has done, it is only necessary to have surveyed the efforts of such of his competitors as Butt and de Courville in England, Meinhard in Germany and Volterra in France. A man of manner in its nicest sense (rather than in its indiscriminate sense of tribute to any actor who doesn't pull up his trousers when he sits down), the fellow is. And those who see in his "Follies" and "Frolics" merely a number of young women running around the stage half-naked are the same yokels who believe that Brieux, the amiable satirist of "Les Hanneton," is an inferior artist to Brieux, the indignant literalist of "La Robe Rogue."

As to the claims of the others who, opposed to this Ziegfeld, are regarded as truer artists of the native theatre, Schopenhauer did away with such as Belasco when he observed that "It is essential to a work of art that it should give the form alone without the matter. . . . This is really the reason

why wax figures produce no æsthetic impression and, therefore, are not, in the æsthetic sense, works of art at all; although if they were well made they produce an illusion a hundred times greater than the best picture or statue could effect; so that if deceptive imitation of reality were the object of art, they would have to take the first place." As for Thomas, recall Derely's "In an age when the struggle for life has become more exclusive than ever, is it not an empty anachronism to represent on the stage only the struggle for woman?" And of such as O'Neil, her celebrated fellow-mime's, "The actor may mark with his imprint the parts that he interprets; but his imprint must be so well confounded with the reality of the personage as not to be realized by the spectator without reflection and comparison . . ." It took the American theatre ten years to realize that George M. Cohan had other talents than catarrh and hair that bobbed up and down. It has taken the American theatre quite as long to realize that Ziegfeld has other talents than Martha Mansfield and Lillian Lorraine.

§ 43

The American Laurel.—Of all the countless English, Spanish, French and Belgian men of letters who lately invaded this friendly Power, the

only one who made anything like an impression, the only one who was viewed with anything approaching favour, was Hugh Walpole. One may well ask why? For there were others, like Dunsany, who are superior artists; there were others, like Blasco Ibañez, who have about them the higher colour of sensationalism that is ever successful in denting the jay American emotionalism; there were others, like Maeterlinck, who are more picturesque; and there were still others, like Galsworthy, who are surrounded with the air of reserve and aloof dignity that generally exercises an hypnosis upon the native susceptibles. In the face of these, in the face of all this, how came it then that Walpole alone won the populace's choicest blooms? The answer is simple. It has nothing to do with Walpole's talents as a novelist. It has nothing to do with anything that Walpole said while he was over here. It has, in short, nothing to do with Walpole's accomplishments in the world of letters or upon the lecture platform. It has to do with Walpole, the fellow himself. Walpole is, intrinsically, the kind of man that women like, and the kind of man that women like is the man who always makes a social, artistic and generally popular impression in the United States.

Walpole, to men, is a charming and likable person. But so are a half dozen of the other English-

men and Frenchmen who came over here at the same time. Yet these others haven't Walpole's gift for impressing the ladies. And, as I have observed, it is what may be called drawing-room woman suffrage that elects the American favourites in the world of art. Alfred Noyes was elected in this manner, and many a greatly superior poet defeated. Richard Harding Davis was elected in this manner, and many an absurdly superior novelist defeated. Jacques Copeau was elected in this manner, and many an even more absurdly superior dramatic artist defeated. It is ever thus. Set Walpole against Joseph Conrad at a tea fight in the East Sixties and before the *petits fours* are half way down the assembled esophagi, the genius of Hugh will have received fifty votes to one as against the talent of Joe.

§ 44

Life and the Drama.—That life often imitates the drama was accepted as a platitude long before John Palmer, elaborating upon Oscar Wilde, set down his abstract conclusions some years ago in the London *Saturday Review.* But platitude though it is, it still remains for some professor to offer up the concrete proofs. At least one such proof occurs to me; and this proof is to be found,

unless I am greatly mistaken, in the way life has imitated the drama in the matter of woman's confession of sin. Twenty years ago, when a woman confessed the stain on her past to a man, she imitated the manœuvers of the leading woman character in the then already long popular Henry Arthur Jones drama. There were sniffles à la Rachel Neve, tears à la Mrs. Dane, tremulous allusions to innocence taken off guard, to betrayed trust, to moonlight, Chopin and other such sentimental knockout drops. . . . "I'd been brought up in a village. I was a child in knowledge. I knew nothing of life. Nothing of the world. He was very kind to me. He was rich and distinguished and flattered me by his notice. And I—Oh, why didn't somebody warn me? Why did they keep me ignorant? I didn't even love him, not in that way—not as I love you. I tell you I knew nothing, nothing! *Nothing!* Till it was too late," etc., etc. . . .

But today when a woman confesses an indiscretion of her past to a man, does she follow the Henry Arthur Jones model? She does not. She follows the Manchester school model—as typified, for example, by some such dramatist as the late Stanley Houghton. No longer the sniffles, tears and apologies. . . . "It was my fault as much as it was his. I was in love with him; he was in love with me; and that's all there is to it!"

So far, so good. But God help us poor men if, some years hence, life in this particular department sees fit to change its latest imitation and proceeds drolly to mimic, instead, the pantomime!

§ 45

The Dog as Actor.—There was recently exhibited a motion pictured named "The Eternal Triangle," the story of which was enacted entirely by dogs. And not merely enacted—as the average Broadway play is enacted by the bipedal mime—but enacted intelligently, vividly and, in spots, almost brilliantly. I can, indeed, at the moment think of no more than *six* American actors who could have given a performance of the leading rôle any more effective than that vouchsafed it by the amazing Airedale who was engaged for the part. Here, plainly enough, we have a new light upon the actor and the business of acting. Those who are happy to regard acting as a high art, as an art calling for acumen, imagination, inventiveness and a lofty craftsmanship and fancy, must here surely find something slightly confounding. Imagine a dog taking Mozart's place!

That the dog may be the actor of the future is perhaps an even easier assumption than that maintained by such champions of the marionette as Gor-

don Craig and Anatole France. Whatever my misgivings personally, it is only fair to admit that there are many indications that point in this direction, and these indications are not lightly to be dismissed even by one like myself who finds some difficulty in accepting seriously an hypothesis that wears so absurd a mask. Yet, ridding oneself of prejudice and looking into the problem with as clear an eye as is possible under the apparently grotesque circumstances, one encounters a number of significant facts. In the first place, this dog performance of the story of the "eternal triangle"—regarded from the soundest level of criticism—is superior in almost every detail of dramatic projection to the recent local projection of any play dealing with the "eternal triangle" save alone Emmanuel Reicher's exposition of "Lonely Lives." Compared with the recent acting of "When We Dead Awaken" in the Neighbourhood Playhouse, it is a masterpiece. Compared with the amateur performance of "Aglavaine and Sélysette," another triangle drama, revealed two seasons ago—a veritable histrionic gem.

That the dog is often an excellent actor hardly needs proof. The brilliant performance of the dog in Frederick Ballard's "Young America" is well remembered. The portrayal of a drunkard by the dog in Officer Vokes' familiar act is immeasurably

superior to any American actor's portrayal of a drunken man in the last fifteen years—with perhaps the two exceptions of Edward Fielding in "Your Humble Servant" and Bruce McRae's admirable bit of work in "The Gold Diggers." The astonishing "Dog Town" act in vaudeville with its company of practised Spitzes needs no citation. The incredibly fine performance of the dog in Alexandra Carlisle's company at the Empire some nine or ten years ago (I can't remember the name of the play; only the dog's performance remains vivid in my memory); the equally fine performance of a dog in a comedy called "The Young Clarissa," enjoyed by trans-Atlantic voyagers in Milan in 1912; the world famous performance of the lady dog Françine in the pantomime at the Concert Maillol; the marvellous dog Teddy in the Mack Sennett buffooneries; the human dogs of Alf Loyal; the compelling dog comedian who bears a remarkable resemblance to the late Weedon Grossmith and serves as the star of the Gaudsmith Brothers' act; the inimitable "Spare Ribs" who played with Claude and Fannie Usher for thirteen years; the amazing dachshund in Golman's famous Continental act; the Michael of Miss Laurette Taylor's original "Peg o' My Heart" troupe whose rôle, even the most prejudiced will grant, no actor could have played one-half so well —these provide further testimony to the dawning

peril of the current pantaloon. Even as I write, indeed, one of the younger American producers is planning a dramatization of Ollivant's "Bob, Son of Battle," with a well-known circus dog in the star rôle.

What has made "Uncle Tom's Cabin" one of the richest of American theatrical properties? The bloodhounds. For one person who goes to the theatre to see the play, there are two who—drawn by flamboyant posters—go to see the dogs. In the instance of tank town companies where the rôles of the dogs have been played by actors (*vide* C. R. Miller's 1911 enterprise), the companies have quickly gone broke. George Bernard Shaw, so he has told Austin Harrison, had in mind, at the time just before he set to work on "Androcles and the Lion," a Biblical play in which a dog figured conspicuously. He has told Harrison that he abandoned the play because he knew that the dog would, in the lingo of the theatre, run away with the play and would thus, irritating the vanity of his colleagues, bring Shaw a financial loss by breaking up the company in the middle of the engagement. Shaw therefore decided to write "Androcles," let an actor play the spurious lion, and so insure a peaceful, harmonious acting company.

There are many reasons why the dog makes a good actor. Initially, unlike his bipedal rival, he

belongs to no union and hence corrupts his work with no politics. Nor does he squander his time in clubs discussing the toothsomeness of this or that houri and the superiority of Cosmo Hamilton to Ibsen. He is faithful, respectful, eager to serve and to obey. If he does not obey he may be made to obey with a whip, whereas it is illegal to strike an actor in New York, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Idaho and South Carolina. Even in England, indeed, it is forbidden to hit an actor save with a vegetable. On the Continent, of course, . . .

More and more it becomes manifest that the old order giveth way to the new. In a day like the present, where literacy is no longer essential to the actor, where one of the best actors on our stage actually cannot read and has to learn his lines from a dictaphone, the human mime rapidly gives ground to the canine. We have already seen Thackeray's "Rose and the Ring" enacted beautifully by wooden marionettes; we have already seen "Pomander Walk" done more brilliantly by babies of six and eight years than by its adult company; we have already seen "Othello" done well in the Lafayette Theatre by a company composed, aside from its Othello, Iago and Desdemona, of ignorant negro elevator boys and unlettered black laundresses. We have seen that human intelligence may be no

more necessary to the business of acting, however essential it may once have been, than it presently is to the become mechanical business of adding up a difficult column of figures and getting fine music out of a piano. The dog has already played an important part in Red Cross work and in the Police Department. And the time is perhaps not far off when his picture will be adorning the covers of the *Theatre Magazine*, *Variety*, and the *Dramatic Mirror*.

§ 46

The Technique of Mystery.—Where in the so-called mystery or detective novel the exact opposite is more often true, the interest in the so-called mystery or detective play lies not in the manner of the author's detection of the guilty person, but in the manner of the author's concealment of him.

§ 47

The High Water Mark in American Production.—What is perhaps the American high water mark in beautiful staging is reached in the Arthur Hopkins production of "Richard III." Never before has the native stage revealed a splendour so simply, yet richly, achieved. Nor before has a text melted more gracefully and liquidly into its

physical outfittings. And particularly in so far as Shakespeare is concerned. The Shakespearian production of the American theatre has hitherto enjoyed a threefold cataloguing. We have had, first, the pasteboard, canvas and purple and green bunch-light school of production that came down to Robert Mantell from the Booth period. We have had, secondly, the compromise of red plush portières and borrowed Madison Avenue furniture affected by the visiting British tragedians and their local imitators. And we have had, thirdly, the musical comedy stage investitures of Joseph Urban, sponsored by George Tyler in his production of "Twelfth Night," and by James K. Hackett in his production of "Macbeth." But with the Hopkins exhibit there has been thrust before us, for the first time in America, a thoroughly tasteful, thoroughly relevant, and thoroughly satisfactory combination of what was best in the old scheme of things, and of what is better and more beautiful in the new.

§ 48

The Criticism of Shakespeare.—In the instance of many modern productions of Shakespeare, the attendant criticism sports a droll false-face. Consider, in example, this Hopkins presentation of Shakespeare's "Passing Show of 1483," more gen-

erally known as "Richard III." In this case it was indignantly argued by one of the hazlitts that Hopkins had committed a most red-hot and unforgivable *faux pas* in modernizing the delivery of the text, in substituting a reasonable composure for the old toothache manner. "This," exploded the hazlitt, "is to act Shakespeare in the mood of Henry Arthur Jones! The blood and fire, the torrential expressions of emotion, the storm and stress which constitute the existence of these abnormal folk of a barbaric day—these Hopkins never suggests! . . . The curses of the Duchess of York do not echo in their tone the revulsion that the outraged mother feels against such an unnatural son . . . Nor could Anne justly syllable her complaints against the murderer of her father and husband with the complacency that Hopkins permits! . . . etc., etc." What we engage here is once again the William Winter notion that poignant feeling is an emotion not of the heart but of the lungs, that the profounder the tragedy the louder must be the yelling. Ah, the wet blanket of tradition! It would have us believe that Shakespeare, alone of all dramatists who ever lived, permits of but one interpretation, and that the stereotyped one. It would contend that a horse-car, being a horse-car and having always been a horse-car, should never be permitted to run by electricity. There

is no sound reason why Shakespeare's "Richard III" should not be played in the mood of Henry Arthur Jones' "Judah" or "The Silver King." Or, if there is, I have yet to hear it.

§ 49

The Critical Subterfuge.—The commonest subterfuge of the incompetent critic is the concealing of ignorance under amiability. Show me a constantly amiable and generously good-natured critic and I shall show you a critic whose mind, when he bares it to himself at night, is full of quicksand and quaking misgivings.

§ 50

Nance O'Neil.—One of the prettiest of the delusions that hover about the American stage is that concerned with the talents of the actress, Nance O'Neil. For many years it has been the custom of the native theatrical commentator to observe that though Miss O'Neil has rarely if ever given concrete evidence of the fact, she is yet undoubtedly an actress of the very highest virtuosity and rank. This legend of the O'Neil art has spread with the silence and deadliness of a Black Plague. And today it is generally taken for granted that,

though Miss O'Neil has never given satisfactory proof of her talents, she is still somewhat esoterically and cryptically one of our very finest histrionic performers.

What is the truth of this Miss O'Neil? As I see it, it is a very simple truth. It is that she is precisely the actress she has disclosed herself to be; it is—aside from the omnipresent guess-work as to what she could do if she could do it, or the theory as to what undemonstrated potentialities lie buried deep in her bosom—that she reveals herself in actuality a distinctly third-rate actress. Her methods are now, as they always have been, the mechanical, clock-like methods of the more accomplished provincial tragedienne. Her vocal organs —strong, full, resonant and often productive of startling effect—are without control; they are as lacking in the capacity for gradual change, for modulation, for changing dramatic pitch, as a loosely screwed snare-drum. Her features, like her voice, are largely inflexible—one had more properly say, perhaps, that they resolve themselves only into the rubber-stamp face-making of the stock company stage. Her carriage and gesture are without eloquence, save in such intrinsically and correlatively wooden drama as is represented, for example, by plays like "The Wanderer." She has never yet, in the decade and a half I have appraised

her professionally, proved save on a single occasion that her rôle had been carefully assayed by her and filtered through her intelligence. And on this single occasion—in the Belasco production of "The Lily"—she occupied a rôle that was actor-proof, a rôle that demanded a minimum of effort for a maximum of effect.

I report here, obviously, the impression of one man—myself. But the impression of this one man would seem, even though he immodestly say it himself, to be an impression derived from and provoked by fact rather than fancy. If Miss O'Neil is the fine actress that they claim her to be, she is yet to establish the fact with an actual performance. But upon actual performance alone she is no more a first-rate actress than a horse, though bred to the blue of Kentucky, is a Suburban winner before he hoofs the race-course. Miss O'Neil is, indeed, less a fine actress than a fine legend. To which contention she once again offers convincing testimony with her performance of "La Malquerida," a performance as wooden as a violin without strings. Never for an instant does it plumb the rôle; never does it search accurately the psychology of the rôle; never does it bring to the rôle any of those qualities that a thoroughly capable actress might bring to it. For a moment perhaps, the moment of the climax to the second act,

the woman's sheer lung-power comes to her aid and a specious effect is the result. But that moment is, like the moment in "The Lily," any actress's moment: it is as simply achievable as a street-car and as ready-made as a thirty dollar suit of clothes. The rest is all stencil. As cut and dried as the apricots in the barrel of a country grocery store. Inch by inch the text of the dramatist fights for its ground with the actress, and inch by inch the actress forces it back, beaten and humble, into the wings.

Am I wrong about Nance O'Neil? Am I blind, ungenerous? It is possible. But I doubt it. If she is a great actress, then Henry Bataille is a great dramatist, Eden Philpotts a great novelist, and pineapple phosphate a great tipple.

§ 51

La Cena della Beffe.—Sem Benelli's grand opera without music, "La Cena della Beffe," is "theatre" to the *n*th: Sardou on the trombone with D'Annunzio at the drums. Undeniably effective and not without a considerable measure of luscious phrase and swaggering situation, the play is yet intrinsically but a florid weaving of such familiar brocades as "She answered, telling me to come at sundown to her garden gate beyond the city

walls," . . . "Today, when fair Aurora with her rosy fingers drew back the sable curtains of the night," . . . and "We are two birds caught in the same net; they have broken our wings; we shall never fly to God's blue heaven again": the modern Italian drama of the imitators of the French romantic drama of thirty-five and forty years ago rather than the modern more independent Italian drama of Giacosa and Rovetta, Martini and del Testa. The play at this late day periodically provokes amiable recollections of Devilshoof, Loris Ipanoff, the Duke de Gonzague, Scarpia, Mazeppa, Premislas and proscenium drop curtains emblazoned with the tableau showing Nero fiddling at the burning of Rome.

§ 52

The Rev. Thomas Dixon.—An illuminating nugget is the Rev. Thomas Dixon's "The Red Dawn," an effort on the part of that gentleman of God to inform his people on the grave dangers of socialism. The religious zeal of this particular shepherd of the Lord takes peculiar forms. When he is not serving the Lord by writing rube-rufflers in which negroes rape small white girls he is busy serving the cause of the Kingdom of Heaven by writing

moving pictures in which drunken, leering Germans amorously chase young Long Island society virgins around locked rooms. And when he is not serving the Saviour by turning out greenhorn pluckers embellished with such revelatory titles as "The Sins of the Father," "The Victim," "The Foolish Virgin" and "The Root of Evil," he is to be found unselfishly devoting his life to the church with such serious dramas as this "Red Dawn," the leading spiritual message of which is a lively hoochie coochie executed by Doraldina, the Reisenweber cabaret pet, assisted by a trio of half-stripped chorus girls. The passionate sincerity and high purpose of the reverend gentleman are clearly discernible in his every theatrical enterprise. He cares no whit about adding to his worldly fortunes if only, by showing the great masses of the people a representation of a large sweaty nigger stalking a small white girl, he can thus relevantly and pointedly—and obviously without gain to himself —uplift them, teach them, and so make life more beautiful. Nor does he care for mere gold— faugh!— if he only may bring the public to realize the glory of God with stage plays like "The Red Dawn" wherein a man seeks to fornicate his niece and wherein a harlot relates her aptitude at manœuvering six men and gives at R 1 an example of

her virtuosity in effecting assignations. A man of noble resolve, a great churchman, a notable bishop of the Uplift!

§ 53

The Russian and the American Dramatist.—The Russian dramatist is one who, walking through a cemetery, does not see the flowers on the graves. The American dramatist is one who, walking through a cemetery, does not see the graves under the flowers.

§ 54

The Too-Perfect Theatre.—The professors who are indefatigable in their effort further to improve the contemporary theatre seem to overlook one important thing. And this is that the theatre has already been improved to a degree where—unless someone soon takes measures to check the danger—it will be irretrievably ruined. One may improve certain things so far, and no farther; and the theatre is one of these. If one sought to improve George Ade's excellent "Fables in Slang" by converting them into the more substantial and exquisite English of Walter Pater one would, clearly, subvert them. Or if one sought to improve Chopin's buoyant scherzo in E, op.54, by deepening its emotional content, or the compositions of

Domenico Scarlatti by muscularizing their beautifully slight structure one would, just as clearly, devastate them. It is the same with the theatre. If one seeks to improve it by taking from it all the infractions and crudities that compose its very soul, one damages it out of all recognition.

All consideration of the box-office aside, it remains that not only the first, but the highest, aim of the theatre is as a showhouse. It is a showhouse whether it offers Shakespeare à la Gordon Craig or Avery Hopwood á la A. H. Woods. It is a showhouse whether it offers "L'Aiglon" or "Twin Beds." To attempt to make the theatre something more than a showhouse is to attempt to make the Flonzaley Quartette the Boston Symphony Orchestra. A showhouse is essentially a showhouse; a quartette is essentially a quartette; each is good enough in its own way. Yet what do the professors seek to accomplish; what have they already accomplished? They have already so distorted the theatre by improving it that it is today less a theatre, less a house of unadulterated diversion, than an austere annex to the art gallery, the college lecture hall and the library. Its fine old youthful barbarism, its beloved old gracelessness, all the old flaws that made it dear to the heart—these all are gone from it. And in their stead have come a polish, a hard and fast beauty and a proximity to life that have taken

from it so much of its erstwhile remote romance, its erstwhile mystery, and its erstwhile wonderful old smell.

When one went to the theatre twenty-five and thirty years ago one knew that one was in a theatre: and when one goes to a theatre, that is obviously what one wants to know and to feel. For the theatre is an escape from reality. But today, once the curtain of a dramatic theatre is up, one is subconsciously uncertain whether one is in a theatre or whether one is in close contact with life. Or, in a musical comedy theatre, whether one is in the studio of some extraordinarily successful scene painter or in the display room of some Fifth Avenue modiste. Seeing the crude drama of other days, one was sure that one was sitting in a show-house. Seeing the remarkably suave drama of this day, one's subconscious self is tricked and deceived. Is this the theatre, it asks; is this a play, or is this life—life that I came here to avoid? When one used to see "The Romany Rye" or "The Marble Heart" or "The Corsican Brothers," one knew every minute that one was in a theatre. When now one sees "Jane Clegg" or "Hindle Wakes" or "The Easiest Way," one doesn't feel that one is peeking into a theatre at romance and unreality so much as one feels that one is peeking out of a theatre at life and reality.

Twenty-five years ago every effort was made to make a person feel that he was in a theatre. To-day every effort is made to make him forget that he is in a theatre. When I used to go to the old Lyceum Theatre and see a character on the stage lift a window-shade and then see the room flooded by a Daniel Frohman bunchlight with a magenta and green sunshine, I knew that I was in a theatre. Now when I go to the new Lyceum Theatre and see a character lift a window-shade and then see the room flooded by a Belasco fabrication with a sun-light as realistic as the real thing, I am fooled for the moment into believing that I am out of a theatre and in an actual scene. And I don't relish it. Nor, I dare say, does any one else who forgets the single instance and considers the situation in its broadest sweep.

Nothing seems to me so absurd as the cry for the theatre to mirror life. Life is precisely what the theatre should not mirror. It should mirror fancy, illusion, hypnotic romance, impossible adventure —everything but life. It should be a world of make-believe, as it was born. It should give us not trees and moons that look real, not William Falders and Laura Murdocks that are real, but trees of shaky canvas and wiggling moons and false-whiskered Hawkshaws and theatrical Lady Gay Spankers. That is, in essence: it is the spirit of

the theatre, not its content, that I refer to. A circus belongs in a tent: it is not the same when it is dolled up in a Madison Square Garden. The theatre and its exhibits, once glorying in their own small circus air, are rapidly becoming Madison Square Gardened. Electrical equipment developed to a point where its dawns and twilights compete with nature's, scenic inventions that convert paint and canvas into landscapes completely deceptive, dramatists and actors who duplicate life so closely that the illusion is too complete, auditoriums so shrewdly designed that not a trace of the old-time theatre feel remains in them—all these things have contributed to a rapidly become too-perfect institution. An institution, in a word, akin to a woman who has painted, penciled, powdered, coiffed and massaged herself to the point of artificial perfection where she is less a human woman than a walking wax model.

It is doubtless this knowledge, felt if unphrased, that lies at the bottom of the artistic revolts against the theatre of today, the revolts of such men as Craig and Fuchs on the scenic side, such men as Bakst and Pankok on the costume side, such men as Appia and Ottomar Starke on the lighting side, and such men as Georg Kaiser and Jean Cocteau on the dramatic and technical side. And, further, to turn to the musical side, such men as Erik Satie and

Georges Auric. Of these, Craig, of course, is the most articulate: he most clearly knows what he is driving at. Where the majority of the others feel that something is wrong, their cures have not yet been perfected: Cocteau, for example, is a mere Greenwich Villager who happens to have been born in Paris; and Bakst, though he has done some beautiful and excellent work, intrinsically a Russian Roycrofter. But Craig's eye, if not always his pen, is sure and clear. His theory is sharp, vital, unerring, even if his attempts to phrase that theory for the reading public are not always so felicitous. Give us back the theatre! he cries—and soundly. It is when he employs the word beauty without a qualifying footnote that he appears sometimes to confound himself. For what Craig would bring back to the theatre is not the hard, set beauty of truth but the gorgeous, liquid beauty of theatrical artificiality. He sees the theatre as a great showhouse, not—like the great majority of advanced theatre bolsheviks—as a sort of combined Louvre, Bibliothèque Nationale and Paquin's. He sees that what it needs at the present time is a rich dose of old-fashioned castor oil to purge it of its mechanically perfect fol-de-rols, its amazing pretenses and realisms, its confusing encroachments upon life and reality. He sees that what it needs —if it is to live and if its future is to regain all

the glory of its past—is its self of yesterday seen through an imagination of today. Filter the old theatre through a sieve of beauty—that is the Craig credo.

The paint and canvas room in Polonius' house in an Edmund Kean production of "Hamlet" surely looked no more to a theatre audience of the last century like an actual room in an actual house than the portièred room in Polonius' house in a Craig-Stanislavski production of "Hamlet" looks to a theatre audience of the present century like an actual room in an actual house. Both are purely "theatre"; both are grounded in a secure theory of the theatre; Craig's room is beautiful "theatre" where the Kean room was ugly "theatre." This is Craig's theory in simple illustration. An audience must ever be reminded that it is in a theatre: that was the sound theory of Augustin Daly. An audience must ever be beautifully reminded that it is in a theatre: that is the sounder theory of Craig. An audience must ever be made to forget that it is in a theatre: that is the theory of the Messrs. Hornimans and Belascos, a theory akin to one which would hold that a thirsty man who rushes eagerly into a brewery with his mouth open and his tongue hanging out should be cleverly persuaded that he is in a Baptist Sunday School.

I believe in realism to a certain extent—I am by no means an impressionist patriot—but did I believe in it to the complete exclusion of everything else I should yet not be able to convince myself that it wasn't a bad thing for the theatre. That way lies a theatre that is kin to the poetry of Robert Service, with its idiotic and alien literality, and to the music of Raymond Hubbell, with its water-whistle imitation of birds and resined-string imitation of bull-frogs. The realistic theatre is as much of an anomaly as an impressionistic laundry. One doesn't put on a dinner jacket, fasten a boutonnière to one's lapel, hail a crooked-metred taxicab and hasten to hand a man behind a grilled window $2.50 in order to get into a place to see something that looks very much like what one has already often seen gratis outside in one's street clothes. And, as I have several times written, the theatre mood is the dinner jacket mood, whether one has on a dinner jacket or not. And, as I have also written, this theatre mood may be catered to aptly and equally by a Reinhardt or an A. H. Woods, by an Antoine or a J. J. Shubert. But whether by Max or Al, by André or Jake, whether in terms of realism, impressionism or any other ism, whether sound or unsound, good or bad—and this is the point—it must be catered to by the theatre in terms of the artificial theatre rather than

by the theatre in terms of the realistic theatre. Belasco has doubtless been uniformly successful in making a lot of money out of his extravagant stage realism not, as so many believe, because of that extravagant stage realism but because his theatre and auditorium are themselves twice as extravagantly unrealistic and theatrical as any of the romantic stages of his contemporaries. Belasco's theatre in West Forty-fourth Street, with its lighting à la Murray's restaurant, its ankle-deep carpet, its unexpectedly encountered mirrors and general, mysterious phrenologist's parlour atmosphere, counteracts whatever untheatrical realism he discloses upon its stage, and so insures no violation of the audience's theatre mood. When one is in the Belasco Theatre, one knows that one is in a theatre, sometimes even after the curtain has gone up. When one is in the gaunt, bare Garrick Theatre at some such persuasive production as "Jane Clegg," one's active mind periodically doesn't distinguish whether one is in a theatre seeing a play or in a provincial English house seeing a family's bickerings.

Does all this seem to be a contradiction of certain of my critical attitudes in the past? No matter. The fact that my personal critical tastes at times run to things that are inimical to what are

perhaps the highest interests of the theatre has utterly nothing to do with the integrity of the present argument. The circumstance that I personally enjoy a good loud burlesque show more than "Plody Prosvyeschcheniya" doesn't necessarily mean that Al Reeves has worked a greater benefit to the theatre than Tolstoi. Nor does the circumstance that the naturalistic and realistic "Weavers" happens to be a better and theatrically more enjoyable play than the symbolic and impressionistic "Death of Tintagiles." Some of the very things that are least to our tastes are the best for us: regular hours, a light diet, a hard pillow, Hunyadi Janos. And some of the very things that are most to our tastes are the worst for the theatre: the drama of Hauptmann, the naturalistic acting of the Barnowski direction, the lighting of Belasco, the architecture of the Little Theatre.

The stage is properly not the playground of the Zolas and the Dreisers, but of the Hewletts and the Cabells. It is the church of human joys and human forgetfulness. It is the eternal boy of the arts. It is never, and never must be, the professor. Let us have back its old canvas mountains that bend in the middle when the villain leans against them, its old proscenium arch of pea-green canvas foliage for summer and winter scenes alike,

its old tin crowns and wooden swords and papier maché locomotives. *They* are the soul of the theatre!

§ 55

The Tiring Business Man.—The business man, the man in trade, is the tiresome fellow he ten times in ten is, not because he persists in talking shop, but precisely because he persists in not talking shop. Any man's business, if he thoroughly understands it, is always interesting. But the business man, instead of talking about the one thing he knows, a thing that would engage the attention and hold the interest of his hearer, insists upon talking of art, music, letters, the theatre, women—of everything about which he knows nothing. Such conversation he believes to be expected of him in the social circle wherein he moves: otherwise, he imagines, he will be held a gross and loutish fellow. The result is the familiar result: one runs a mile immediately one sees a business man heave into sight. But let the business man talk about the manner in which he runs his great banking house, or the manner in which he built up a one hundred thousand dollar business from some down-at-the-heel yokel store, or the manner in which he arrived at the successful way to persuade the public to use his can-opener and no other, and one would

stand his ground fascinated. The business man who talks about Arno Holz's influence on Hauptmann is as interesting as the poet who talks about the 1920 sales of President Suspenders.

§ 56

On the Critical Digestion.—The common accusation against the dramatic critic by the present day theatrical manager when the critic writes adversely of the manager's production is that the critic suffers sorely from indigestion. Just where the connection lies I can't exactly say, but the fact remains that Daniel Frohman's famous old Lyceum Stock Company, which no critic of that day dispraised, was backed by the man who owned Carter's Little Liver Pills.

§ 57

Intelligence and the Dramatist.—The quality least valuable to a dramatist is intelligence. It is no more necessary for a first-rate dramatist to be of a highly developed intelligence than it is for a first-rate painter, sculptor or composer. He must, like these others, of course know thoroughly the essentials of his craft; he must, like these others, of course have imagination, technical dexterity, and high personal resource. But he may

otherwise be a blockhead. This is singularly true in the case of dramatic writing. A dramatist may be a dramatist of the first flavour and yet be, by the accepted standards, an uneducated man. He may not know the first thing of philosophy, æsthetics, literature, painting, music, history, ethics, economics—the first thing of any of these or of any of the other fundamentals of sound training—and yet write beautiful, moving plays. If George Bernard Shaw is not a really great dramatist, it is his intelligence alone that has kept him from being one. If Gerhart Hauptmann is a really great dramatist, it is his simplicity of mind, his confined education, that has made him one. Education and training are the check-reins clearly discernible in the dramatic writings of such men as Moore and Chesterton: less intelligent men, their plays would lose a measure of the dismantling reserve, the corseted air, which they currently contain and reveal. The writing of emotion provoking drama calls for a peculiar kind of courage, and this peculiar kind of courage a highly educated man lacks. The man so educated has had much of his natural and original emotionalism, gaudery, venturesomeness and *amour propre* boiled out of him; and these are the very qualities that are valuable to the dramatist. The great dramatist is often the one who retains a full confidence in false hopes, and dreams, and

illusions: who sees the world through a rainbow, and who muses on gorgeous and compelling, if bogus, fancies. The worst dramatist is often the one whose eyes, for all his dissuading prayers, relentlessly penetrate the shams of love and the pretty mirages of faith. Only an intelligent man can write fine satire; only one whose mind is still somewhat perfumed with the falsities of life, fine drama of another sort. Humour, the first attribute of profound culture, would have restrained the hand that wrote the fine drama called "The Weavers." And, by the same mark, the humour that wrote the fine drama called "Cæsar and Cleopatra" has restrained the same hand from exercising a proper dramatic power in the serious emotional scenes it has occasionally, if but for a few moments, essayed.

§ 58

On the Criticism of Drama and Acting.—Convincingly to criticize drama, one must have a wide knowledge and sharp understanding of drama, to say nothing of a sound point of view. But convincingly to criticize acting, one need have only opinions: it matters not whether those opinions are predicated upon experience, nor whether they are intrinsically sound or unsound. For where the standards whereby drama is criticized have been

clocked off more or less precisely, where drama responds to a more or less exact, impersonal criticism, the standards whereby acting is criticized have been, and remain, at bottom little else than the variable standards of personal reaction and prejudice. One can, to a degree, outline clearly the precepts of dramatic criticism, but the criticism of acting has no precepts, or at least no precepts save those that lie with entire obviousness upon the surface. No first-rate critic of drama has ever been considered a first-rate critic of acting. No accepted critic of acting has ever been considered even a tenth-rate critic of drama. The critic of drama, at his best, is always something of a dignified craftsman. The critic of acting, at his best, is usually something of a dignified ass.

§ 59

The Touch of Mica.—Even the greatest dramatist must always have in him something of the plebeian. It may be a faint streak, indiscernible to the penetrating eye, but it is within him nevertheless. No thoroughbred aristocrat, wholly free of democratic taint, can write real drama. Drama is the stubborn, automatic echo in an artist's heart of the voice of the people from whom he has sprung.

§ 60

Eugene O'Neill.—Eugene O'Neill's "Beyond the Horizon" comes as a hope and tonic to the American drama. It is a tragedy that plumbs deeply the hearts and souls of human beings, that unfolds with eloquence their dreams and their disappointments, that flashes before the mind of its spectator a living, breathing, despairful panorama. It is well devised, well written, and its defects fade in the contemplation of the work as a whole. It is not what is generally called "popular stuff." It has none of the sunshine jounce of a "Pollyanna," none of the horse-pistol bounce of a "Within the Law," none of the cheap gulps and cheap chuckles of a "Peg O' My Heart." It presents to the bucolic eye no procession of Boué Sœurs satins and Wetzel swallowtails. It tells, instead, of the moving drama of human life, without perfume, or posies, or inserted dialogue by Mr. Willard Mack. It is as far removed from jollity as a Scandinavian Y. M. C. A. picnic. It is depressing as the truth is often depressing. But through that depression —the word is employed in the accepted playhouse sense—there gleams, like the periodic, sudden flash of a sweeping searchlight, an understanding of and broad sympathy for a mankind whose lot

is low and tragic, and whose feet climb ever unascendable hills.

The story of the play is of two brothers and a girl. One of these brothers is a consumptive and a dreamer; the other, a bluff and rugged man of the soil. The girl is the daughter of a poor neighbour. The stronger of the brothers is understood to be engaged to the girl, though no word has been spoken. The weaker of the brothers loves her in silence. This weaker brother, as the play begins, is about to set forth, from the farm hills that imprison him, into the world he has ever dreamed of: the world of high seas and remote and mysterious ports and gay and gaudy lands. The stronger brother is to stay at home with his parents and continue, as in the past, to help them till the sustaining soil. But the neighbour's girl comes at twilight to whisper to the dreaming brother that it is he—not the other—whom she has always loved. And love, thus suddenly revealed to the dreamer, brings him to renounce the voyage upon which he was to go at dawn, to let the stronger brother (magnanimous in his defeat) go in his stead, and to settle down with his sweetheart upon his father's farm.

Three years pass. The fragile romance is already broken. The dreamer's father is dead and upon his own shoulders descends the burden of keeping up the farm, supporting his wife and baby,

and hoping against hope for the happiness that was once his in illusion and love. The wife, thinking now of the brother she rejected, the brother who, as husband, might out of his own strength have made life pleasanter and easier for her, nags the dreamer, berates him, blocks from him his every quondam vista of gold-shot skies. And, finally, tells him openly that she prays God she will soon be rid of him and in the arms of his brother. And, as the curtain falls, this other brother's halloo is heard in the distance: he has returned at last from the long, adventurous cruise.

The stronger brother will have none of the woman; his love for her, he smiles, has been forgotten these several years. Moreover, there is a chance for him to go to the Argentine—a paying business—he can't afford to stay here and help with the decaying farm. He will, of course, if his brother wants him to. But this sacrifice the dreaming brother, the brother who cherishes his fancies tattered as they are, this the brother cannot bring himself to ask. And the stronger brother goes down the hill-road once again, leaving behind him the wreck of a love, the wreck of a household, the wreck of a thousand valiant aspirations.

The dreamer, now weak with disease and shattered hopes, sees vanish his last chance to break through the surrounding hills that inexorably pen

him in. The sea—love—life—these are never to be his. His wife and his child are rattling chains that weigh him down, so too are his weakening lungs, his sentimentality, his cowardice. Slowly, as the end of life and hope closes in upon him, he drags himself to the top of a great hill overlooking the sea—the sea that is romance and valour, adventure and glorious life—and, looking down upon his lost illusions, breathes his adieu to the world.

That is the story O'Neill tells in this, his first full-length play. He tells it simply, often beautifully, always impressively. There is no straining after theatrical effect. There is no meticulous setting of climaxes. There is no specious injection of comedy. The picture is a drab picture, but it is vivid, vital, comprehending.

The bulk of O'Neill's antecedent writing has been in the one-act form. In this form he has written a number of excellent plays. Most notable of these is "The Moon of the Caribbees," a gorgeous picture of the hot moonlit tropic seas. The sea, which he has himself followed, is O'Neill's canvas. He loves it, fears it, understands it. And he can project its glamour and its hideousness, its romance and its terrors. The sea reaches "Beyond the Horizon" only from afar, but its spirit permeates his shorter plays. O'Neill has since written three other full-length plays. Two of

these, "Chris" and "Gold," are plays of the sea and men of the sea. The third, named "The Straw," is a drama of tuberculosis. I have read the plays in manuscript; they are uncommonly well done and of uncommon distinction. The flavour of Broadway is nowhere in them. The deadly odours of the showshop are nowhere about them. And so I repeat what I have herein already written: that Eugene O'Neill is the most promising (and already the most distinguished) young man of the American theatre.

§ 61

High Comedy.—The stark poverty of American comedy is emphasized no more clearly—and pitiably—than in the continued veneration at this late day of what is commonly described as "probably the finest of native comedies," to wit, "The Truth" of Clyde Fitch. "The Truth" is an amusing little play; it has a half dozen fairly witty lines; it touches off a character now and again with a flash of mild penetration; but it is at best a third-rate performance—third-rate, that is, if one employs upon it any standard of criticism that approaches, however remotely, to punctilio. And yet, mediocre though it is, the fact remains that this play of Fitch's is actually—by the terms of a sorry com-

parison—one of the best of American comedies.

One reason for this suave comic poverty is to be found in the circumstance that, in fourteen instances out of every fifteen, a comedy written by an American playwright reflects less the latter's observation of American life, modes and manners than his observation of some previous American playwright's observation of American life, modes and manners. The result is a sequence of comedies that are merely so many show-shop cut-outs, things of the stage stagey with little more relation to life than an equal number of horsehair bustles. It is not uncommon for an American to hoist his first act curtain upon a first-rate comic theme; it is more than merely uncommon for an American to drop his first act curtain with that first-rate comic theme not already gone the way of the stage rubber-stamp.

The writing of high comedy calls for sophistication, breeding, temperament, polish. Without these qualities the writer who valiantly essays high comedy is on a plane with the toreador who swaggers into the bull-ring with a pen-knife. A bounder may write good melodrama, sometimes even good drama, but he may no more hope to write good high comedy than he may hope to kiss the Queen of England.

§ 62

Brieux, the Propagandist.—Though a certain force is found still to remain in the old propaganda bones, Brieux's theses dramas are ever better suited to the platform of Cooper Union than to the platform of the modern theatre. In that theatre, these pieces impress one very much as a loud persistent talker, whatever the content of his talk, impresses one in the drawing-room. There may be a place for such things in the theatre, but not in the theatre which one sets one's faith upon. That theatre, when it preaches at all, preaches in terms of wit.

§ 63

Writing Versus Playwriting.—Plumbing the astonishment and enthusiasm engendered among the local schlegels, theatre managers and theatre patrons by such a play as Booth Tarkington's comedy, "Clarence," we discern the astonishment and enthusiasm always displayed by the parties in point when there is presented to them the unaccustomed spectacle of a play by a man who knows less about writing plays than he knows about what our coloured friends call writing writing. So rare in the American theatre is the appearance of a man who knows how to write, and so regular the ap-

pearance of men who know merely how to write plays, that the advent of the former is almost always the occasion for a generally unanalyzed jubilee. When the Samuel Shipmans and Owen Davises who know all about writing plays appear in the theatre, a three-inch review is regarded as ample by the Times Square diderots; but let there once in a great while pop up a Shaw or a St. John Ervine or any other man who knows little or nothing of the accepted business of play-writing but a great deal about writing and the excitement becomes intense.

The critic in "Fanny's First Play" who observed ironically, "If it's by a good author it's a good play and if it's by a bad author it's a bad play," spoke less ironically than he knew. In even the worst play by a good writer there is a touch of something, however fleeting, that one rarely finds in even the best play by a bad writer. Tarkington's "Up From Nowhere" is a very awful affair—a rube-cut straight from the rump—but even so there is in it a character and a line of dialogue or two the like of which the Shipmans and their "East is Wests" and the Davises and their "At Nine Forty-fives" never—even at their best—reveal. The Tarkington effort, "Clarence," is a triumph of writing over play-writing. There is in it not a trace of the dictated stage dialogue of his jay jouncer mentioned above, of R.U.E.'s, L. 1's and R. 2's and

all the other stencilled platform baggage of the Broadway box-office Cagliostros, but instead the sort of writing done eight hundred miles from Broadway, out in Indiana, on such things as "Penrod" and "Seventeen."

§ 64

The Movies.—That the persons who relish moving pictures would appear at the present writing to have a very large plurality over the persons who do not, would seem coincidentally to explain why Houdini is regarded a greater American than James Branch Cabell, and Mr. Norman Hapgood admired above Powers' trained elephants.

As I see it, the chief intrinsic trouble with these moving pictures is that they move. If one has ever attended a film and then—just as one was feasting his eyes on that lovely bit of sapphire shot with sunlight called Mary Miles Minter—has had the thing suddenly move on him and confront his vision with the spectacle of some neo-floorwalker leading man posed against a palm-pot, one will the better appreciate my point of view. The effect is much like gazing with pleasurable emotions upon Alfred Cheney Johnston's picture of Kathleen Martyn on page one of a copy of *Vanity Fair* and amidst the meditation absent-mindedly turning the page

and suddenly finding oneself looking instead at a picture of Leopold Godowsky.

If, in good truth, the moving pictures moved to any advantage the case might be different. But what happens? The moment one is worked up via the inserts, or whatever it is that they call the reading matter, to expect a fruity scene in which Miss Bara is promised to do something which Mrs. Bara certainly wouldn't approve, the film moves and then, just as Miss Bara is about to do it, there intrude a couple of columns of flickering dots that are foreign to the story and conceal from one's eyes the whole piquant business. These dots occupy the same relation to the moving pictures that the drop-curtain occupies to the second act of a Guitry farce. What they are, no one seems to know. Nor does any one seem able to inform me how they get into a film. But I have yet to see a moving picture in which, at inopportune and provoking moments, they did not descend on the just and unjust alike. Maybe they are the tears wept by the president of the company over the big salary he has had to pay the star.

Whenever a great new two dollar film production is revealed in New York and I am exhorted in botanical parts of speech by a wild press-agent to visit the theatre where it is being shown to enor-
s and enthusiastic crowds, I feel, in the light

of past experiences, much like the fellow in the story culled from some German novel by Shaw. A crowd of mediæval warriors, fired by the eloquence of Peter the Hermit, burned with a Christian longing to rush to the Holy Land and charge in serried ranks upon the Paynim host—all except one man, who was obviously not impressed. Indignant at his coldness, they demanded what he meant by it. "I've been there," he said.

I've been to at least half a dozen of these alleged great moving pictures and while, true enough, I have seen Annette Kellermann as only that lady's husband should see her, I've been otherwise disappointed. And what is more, I feel that every one I have spoken with about the pictures has been equally so—though they seem to be backward, for obscure reasons, in admitting it. I find, however, that almost everybody apologizes for these big feature pictures in the same way. You say you didn't see much to boast of in the picture and nine persons in ten will invariably reply, "Yes—but the *battle scenes!*"

The battle scene is to the moving picture what the Cinderella story is to the dramatic stage. It seems never to fail and, however poorly it is done, the yokels seem to take to it. A moving picture director can conceive of no other use for a crowd of a thousand supernumeraries than to divide it into

halves and set it loose on some inoffensive and peaceful cow pasture. Sometimes the director digs two long ditches in the cow pasture and calls the resulting rumpus "The Battle of Gettysburg" and sometimes he puts up a big crucifix on the cow pasture and calls the ensuing fracas "Joan of Arc Lifting the Siege of Orléans." But here imagination seems to halt. The vast amount of money wasted on these battle scenes might very easily be saved, especially in the instance of the more modern battle scenes. Since about all that the spectator can see in these battle scenes is a thick cloud of smoke penetrated at irregular intervals by Mr. Henry B. Walthall waving a sword, why, instead of hiring a huge crowd of expensive utility men, wouldn't it be just as good to set a lot of old rags on fire, wait until the smoke got thick enough and then signal Mr. Walthall to get busy with his cutlass and go as far as he likes?

Speaking of battle scenes, I must express a greater personal predilection for the "Custard's Last Stand" species of warfare purveyed by the Sennett gentleman. Superior æsthetes and more cultured persons may prefer M. Bushman in his dress suit with the flap pockets, but the spectacle of a pie of loose morals sailing ribaldly into the ear of an actor wearing an Ascot tie with a sack coat provokes in me a sympathetic and brotherly feeling.

That pie has something in common with me—a *je ne sais quoi*—an I know not what—but something. In the presence of that pie I feel the same *rapprochement* that I experience in the presence of Torvald Helmer. And when I behold it sailing gaily through the air with its message to Garcia I realize that it would be something of a pity, after all, if the moving pictures didn't move. The one objection I have to these gross *opera* is the presence in them of Miss Mabel Normand. Too vastly fair and sightly a creature this, for work so humble. Her various talents might to very much better advantage be revealed in another kind of picture. I should, indeed, be interested to see her in Miss Kellermann's brand.

It is constantly being urged that the leading fault with the motion pictures lies in the purveyors' habit of spending approximately five dollars on the scenario writer and the story, and $385,000 on fixing up the cow pasture, on the Louis XV ice-box, the Henry VIII stove, the Charles II sink, the Ming bed for Miss Bara to die on, the palms for the restaurant scene, the extra charge for serving Mr. Carlyle Blackwell's breakfasts in his rooms, and the round-trip fares to Bermuda, including the four extra tickets for the star's French and coloured maids. My sympathies, here, however, are with the purveyors. If all the moving picture

stories are like those I happen to have seen, the purveyors are quite liberal with their expenditures in this direction. The scenario writer is handsomely paid.

That the movies were the one great factor in assisting the government of the United States to prosecute successfully the war against Germany and make the world unsafe for cervelatwurst, must be apparent to anyone who studied the situation with an open mind. For example, that the sinister workings of the Wilhelmstrasse would have remained a cryptic menace to the United States had it not been for the complete exposé of those deviltries by the sagacious films, few can longer doubt. While the American Secret Service was still baffled by the uncanny activities of the German spy bureau, while it was still utterly in the dark as to the precise mysterious manner in which this spy system was subtly accomplishing its nefarious ends, the movies came to the rescue of the nation, showed up the entire business and put a spike into the whole enterprise.

Take, for instance, that amazing movie entitled "Behind Hunnish False Whiskers," produced for the information and enlightenment of the baffled United States Secret Service by the Super-Excelsior Film Company. Until this picture was flashed upon the screen, the United States Secret Service

had laboured under the false impression that what the agents of the Wilhelmstrasse were most eager to accomplish was the general weakening, in one way or another, of America's military and naval efficiency. On this indefinite theory the American Secret Service was expending all its effort and wasting precious money and invaluable time while the German spies were left free to the consummation of the dirty work they were, unperceived by our Secret Service, actually up to. Imagine the surprise of our Secret Service agents and the officials of the United States government, therefore, when they drifted casually into "Behind Hunnish False Whiskers" (scenario by the eminent military expert, Miss Mae Alys Winckmann, of Los Angeles) and learned to their intense consternation that what the German spy system was really centering all its energies upon was not the debilitating of the mass of American fighting forces on land and sea, nor yet the blowing up of warehouses and ammunition works, nor even yet the plotting against railroad shipments, nor the sowing of discord among labourers in the shipyards, nor the buying up of Senators from the Middle West, nor the arming of a vast horde of aliens along the Canadian border, nor anything like this, but the blowing up of what was apparently the most important strategic bridge in all America, the blowing up of a bridge

that, once destroyed, would completely disrupt the military plans of the United States and render those plans practically useless, the blowing up of a bridge whose enormous importance had not even occurred to the American officials—the bridge, to wit, that spans the small creek back of the Bull Durham billboard in the vacant lot two blocks to the left of the Super-Excelsior Film Company's studio over in Fort Lee, New Jersey!

I betray no secret when I tell you that it was directly as a result of this startling exposé that the United States Secret Service agents arrested Herman Schmierkäse's son-in-law, August Rinderbrust, and found, in the back room of his delicatessen store—and *not three hundred yards* from the bridge—a Brownie kodak and several undeveloped snapshots of the Fort Lee ferry, Grant's tomb and Olga Petrova.

Consider, too, the now famous case of the manner in which the eyes of the officials at Washington were opened by the movie entitled "Inside Secrets of the Kaiser's Wiener Schnitz'l, or, How the Berlin Spy System Has Enveloped America in a Net of Marinierte Rostbraten," written by the celebrated military strategist, Miss Elvira P. Dingle, of Goshen, N. Y., (winner of the Grandioso Film Company's prize of ten dollars in gold for the best 25,000 word motion picture scenario dealing

with the war), and produced by the Grandioso Film Company, J. Pierce Stonehead directing, in its California studios at an expense of no less than $75,000, of borrowed money. (It will be remembered that, up to the time this masterly movie was presented, the authorities were resting complacent under the delusion that the Kaiser's agents in this country were directing their chief intrigue toward such ends as disabling American ships and German ships that had been taken over upon the declaration of war, spreading insidious propaganda, making blue-prints of coast fortifications and harbour works, and the like.) It was "Inside Secrets of the Kaiser's Wiener Schnitz'l, or How the Berlin Spy System Has Enveloped America in a Net of Marinierte Rostbraten" that disclosed the true intent of the enemy and permitted the authorities to take action and save the country before it was too late. This movie—and here I but repeat what is now history—gave the first inkling that what the Huns were up to in America was by no means what the United States authorities ignorantly and foolishly supposed but, quite to the contrary, that what they were up to and what they were bending all their energies to accomplish was nothing less than the chloroforming of William A. Brady's daughter Alice, and the snitching from her of a blue-print which, so I have been informed, contained the

valuable secret of the exact amount of open floor space available in the Famous Players' Studio in West 56th Street for Elsie Ferguson's next picture.

The part that the movies played in stirring up the patriotism of the nation and keeping that patriotism at white heat—an essential thing to the successful prosecution of the war—cannot be overestimated. Who so callous that he could resist the appeal, for example, of a movie showing the ruins of the Bon Ton Shirt and Collar Factory at Thirty-second Street and Tenth Avenue after its recent fire and labelled "What Was Left of the Village of Fromage de Brie After the German Hordes Had Passed Through It"? And who so without soul that he could remain passive before the display of a few hundred feet clipped out of an old movie of "The Two Orphans" and set forth as "View of Two Little Belgian Kiddies Whose Father Was Shot by the Huns"?

But the value of the movie as an adjunct of war by no means rests here. That the movie may serve as a record of the war, as a history of the war, one can doubt no more than one can doubt what I have already proved in these other important directions. For instance, let me recall to your mind the famous movie entitled "With the German Armies on the Eastern Front," displayed promiscuously in this country before we entered the war and announced

as "official" and as having been taken by the staff of German government photographers directly on the firing line. Can one forget the vividness of this remarkable record? Can one be oblivious to its value to the school-children of the future in learning the methods of warfare, the manner in which the enemy carried on its Russian campaign, etc., etc? Who, for instance, can fail to appreciate the value as a stragetic military document of the well-remembered scene in this movie showing German soldiers drinking beer out of tin cans, of the equally unforgettable scene showing the Kaiser attending a garden party at Stuttgart in 1905 and labelled "Ovation to the Emperor in Warsaw After the Recent Taking of That City by His Troops," of the remarkable scene showing two young German soldiers washing their socks, and of that never-to-be-forgotten picture of German efficiency showing a Prussian lieutenant successfully shaving himself in front of a broken mirror?

Not less helpful than the exposés of the movies were the exposés vouchsafed by the war plays. It is, indeed, a frightful thing to contemplate what might have happened had not our Secret Service been properly posted by these plays on innumerable puzzling points. If it had not been for the play called "The Man Who Stayed at Home," for example, how could our government agents ever

have known that the best way to trap German spies was to hide outside French windows and keep the eyes peeled for decanters of sherry, since—as the play in question conclusively proved—all German spies, immediately they find themselves alone in a house, promptly fill up the required number of sherry glasses and, lifting them above their heads, give themselves completely away by shouting "Der Tag!" at the tops of their voices? In the same way, the play called "The Hyphen" informed our Secret Service that whenever two or three German spies get together with the immediate intention of blowing up a nearby munitions factory, their first step toward the successful, undetected negotiation of the business is to make sure that all the doors and windows are wide open and then to put their heads close together and, in voices that can be heard six blocks away, sing "Die Wacht am Rhein." And "Seven Days' Leave," another very helpful war play, explained to our government agents that all lady spies in the Kaiser's employ who pretended to be Belgian widows whose husbands were murdered by the Germans and who appeared in deep mourning in the afternoons might readily be detected by their invariable habit of wearing brilliantly coloured décolleté gowns in the evenings.

But to return to the movies. That the latter assisted more than any other thing in making Amer-

ica realize, while we were still a neutral nation, the imperative necessity for preparedness, is now fully obvious. The manner in which these movies brought home to us the horrors consequent upon an invasion of the United States by an armed and relentless foe and so awakened us to an immediate need for a sufficiently big and powerful army and navy, is readily recalled. Chief among the movies which eloquently proved this to us was the one called "The Fall of a Nation." As I remember this stirring screen document, it brought home the terrifying realization that down on Long Island there lived a blonde against whom the whole German army had evil designs. That the United States was as a nation asleep and that it was all-vital that it wake up instanter and put a couple of million trained men in the field and build a fleet of a thousand new battleships to keep the Boches from imprinting unwelcome kisses on the mouth of this Long Island blonde, the movie demonstrated so compellingly and so clearly that the government at Washington got busy at once. And I violate no confidence when I tell you that the sinking of the Lusitania, supposed by many misinformed persons to have been responsible for the waking up of the country to German frightfulness, had very much less to do with it than the scene in "The Fall of a Nation" which showed the Freeport virgin

being chased around the room by a bibulous Hun file-closer.

Then, too, there was the similar movie put out by Mr. J. Stuart Blackton and called, if I am not mistaken, either "Defenseless America" or something of the sort. This movie, a powerful plea for preparedness, brought to the attention of our government the error in "The Fall of a Nation" and explained that it was not a Freeport blonde that the German army had its eyes on, but a New York brunette. The moment the enemy landed in America, this movie showed us, it was due to make a bee line for the home of this dark metropolitan chicken and surround the house while its General went up to the library on the second floor and made a lascivious eye at the houri.

Plainly enough, such things were enough to make any nation, however backward, sense at once the need for a strong fighting force. And so I confidently repeat that movies like this and the many allied movies were the one great and incontrovertible aid to our government in its prosecution of the war. Without these movies, I shudder to think what might have happened.

§ 65

Rachel Crothers.—Each more recent successive play of Rachel Crothers marks a downward step in

her career as a dramatic artist and an upward step in her career as a box-office artisan. That this descent is, however, to some degree the result of premeditation, that the playwright is ever somewhat better than her play, is fairly obvious. But that the teeth of Broadway are gradually biting and chewing so deep into her artistic conscience that in a year or so that conscience will bear the proud aspect of a Hamburger steak, is quite as apparent. For, more and more, all that was of sound accent in the Crothers work is disappearing and its place being taken by the adroitly manipulated but intrinsically cheap and trashy jig and jargon of the yokel stage.

First in "A Little Journey" and then in "39 East," it has been made further evident that the immediate enterprise of Miss Crothers rests in the attempt to adapt the technique of Clare Kummer to such tastes as find that technique too subtle and delicate. Miss Crothers, observing the limited appeal of the Kummer representations, has elected herself a hokum syringe and, her eye doubtless glittering at her own sagacity, has gone after the big trade by expeditiously eliminating the pretty humour, easy sentiment and simple grace from the Kummer technique and supplanting them, respectively, with B. F. Keith wheezes on Kansas, bad eggs and chorus girls' motor cars and diamonds,

with Marcus Loew sentimentalisms on spring flowers, women's chastity and the moon, and with such Pantages whimsies as the girl who, though she loves a man deeply, breaks into tears and drops her head in great humiliation when he dares offer her modesty the affront of a kiss. The deliberateness of this general enterprise of Miss Crothers is especially noticeable in the second named play. The fable is, in essence, that of Miss Kummer's "Be Calm, Camilla." The treatment is, in essence, that of the chiropractic school of playwriting: the kneading and pummeling of every bone in the play with such painful thoroughness and pressure that the play, though ostensibly treated for hysteria and enjoined by the playwright to remain relaxed and quiet, becomes twice as unruly and hysterical as it was originally.

This "39 East" is not so much the result of a study of human nature, as has been claimed for it in certain critical quarters, as the result of a study of actors. For every flash of the observing Crothers of other days—the Crothers of "Old Lady 31," for example, or "The Three of Us"—there are a dozen examples of the inferior Crothers of today: the Crothers who, brazenly rattling the thirty silver pieces in her fist, sells her artistic soul to the box-office with low-comedy renditions of "Rocked in the Cradle of the Deep," venerable jokes on

boarding-house fodder and the Mayflower, lachrymose trepidations over the danger that confronts virtuous young girls in New York, and such rubber-stamp Gus Hill characters as the acidulous spinster who sits with her hands crossed over her middle and snaps out sarcastic remarks, the comic Irish policeman, the flirtatious widow who is constantly dropping something for the men to pick up, the Italian who longs sentimentally for his sun-kissed native land, the portly negro serving maid who says "Lawdy" and elaborately rolls her eyes when slightly alarmed, the boarding-house madame in the maroon plush dress who speaks of her aristocratic forebears. . . .

On the other hand, there is a suggestion of the better, finer and now dying Crothers in the drawing of two sex-starved old maids, in the composition of the love scene between the young people in the first act, and in the writing of the brief scene between the landlady and the young girl (in design somewhat similar to the scene in her play, "He and She") in the final act.

§ 66

The Pathological Sarah.—The art of Mimi Aguglia, the Sicilian Bernhardt, on such occasions as it is at all made manifest, may be said to be essentially

that of the Johns, rather than the Arthur, Hopkins.

§ 67

Drinkwater's "Lincoln."—Press-agented with an advance flourish of trombones, kettle-drums, bassoons, ratchets, cablegrams, spasms in the New York *Post* and *Times*, full guarantees by Arnold Bennett, circulars reprinting British eulogies, lyceum lectures, shrewdly instigated literary-supplement debates and jawing generally, John Drinkwater's play ,"Abraham Lincoln," was at last revealed to the curious local public. And with its revealment came the associated revealment that it was as absurdly overestimated a piece of writing as the hick hazlittry had ever succumbed to. Produced with fine taste and a fine pictorial quality and acted in the main by a competent troupe of cabotins, the play itself proved in action what it proved by its printed page: to wit, that while it was not without the measure of effectiveness which is ever the portion of plays, however poor, that deal with high personages and high historical events, it was lacking in every one of those qualities that the advanced tooting claimed for it. There was not a trace of imagination in the manuscript from start to finish: it was as literal as a newspaper's account of a street fight. There was not a trace of poetry in it, nor a trace of

soundly sympathetic insight into character. All that was sharply projected was projected not by the dramatist, but by the force of the memorable man and the memorable events of which the dramatist treated.

The play, as presented upon the American stage, was slightly altered. In the printed version of the piece as it was done in Hammersmith, the London suburb, there were a number of phraseological and rhetorical absurdities that, had they been vouchsafed to the American ear, would have raised a derisory howl: absurdities such as placing in the mouth of General Grant the species of speech common to a head clerk in Selfridge's, and in the mouth of an American negro the species common to the Sioux Indian. These amazements were edited out of the manuscript. But for the rest, this manuscript was the same as that used abroad. And, sitting before it, one could not rid oneself of the suspicion, possibly baseless, that the success of the play in London was grounded upon the same phenomenon that accounted for the peculiar success in the same capital of "Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch." Just as it is now an acknowledged truth that "Mrs. Wiggs" succeeded surprisingly with the English because the English believed that the characters of the play were representatively American—and so went to the perform-

ance much as they would go to a circus sideshow—just so is it perhaps probable that they rushed to see the Drinkwater play to snicker at our most grotesque, if most beloved, American President.

Lincoln perhaps impresses the English more as a curiosity than as a statesman. The man who would go to Grant's headquarters near Appomattox wearing a top hat, the man who would sleep upon two chairs in the attitude of a vaudeville acrobat poised for a balancing feat, the man who would read from the work of Artemus Ward, and roar over it, during a critical meeting of his cabinet—such a man must surely strike the suave and velvet-footed English as a comic figure. This is Lincoln as Drinkwater pictures him. I do not say that Drinkwater pictures him unfaithfully, unfairly. But, whether or no, the picture must amuse the British rather than impress them. We Americans know Lincoln; his very gaucherie has made him dear to the American heart; his very crudity and grotesque demeanour are lost sight of in the intrinsic purple of him. But do the English thus know him, and thus view him? Unless I miss my guess, they do not!

I am skeptical of Drinkwater's sincerity, and I am skeptical of the English theatre-going public's sincerity. I hope I do not ladle out injustice ill-deserved, but I somehow feel as Burton Rascoe felt

when he passed critical judgment upon the play in book form. "I suspect," he observed, "that Mr. Drinkwater is cashing in on a great name to which there is attached a very widespread interest. Frankly, I do not think the play is complimentary to Lincoln; and I detect, maybe unwarrantably, a subtle sneer in the applause of these Englishmen at a figure which, in America, is held in particular reverence. The Lincoln of Mr. Drinkwater is not the Lincoln of Lord Charnwood's excellent biography, the Lincoln of school history, but a Lincoln who is stubborn, conceited, exceedingly limited in force and intelligence, a jester, a misogynist, and a visionary whose vision is suspect. There is more than a hint of greed and personal ambition in the Lincoln that Mr. Drinkwater depicts. Possibly that was the true Lincoln, but I fail to see how so deficient a man can be saluted by Arnold Bennett as one of the world's greatest and finest characters."

I do not share Rascoe's failure to see how Bennett could do this. Bennett had a considerable financial interest in the Hammersmith theatre where Drinkwater's play was produced.

§ 68

Blonde Versus Brunette.—The blonde, on the average, appeals to the American male more often

than her dusky sister for the same reason that the American male is more often beguiled by light beers than by dark, by tan shoes than by black, by brilliant restaurants than by dimly lighted ones, by colorado claros than by colorado maduras, by yellow raincoats than by black, and by highly burnished gold jewelry than by gold jewelry with a dark Roman finish. What this reason is, I do not know.

§ 69

The American Miss W. S. Gilbert.—There may be less imaginative music show librettists than Miss Anne Caldwell, but I am not privy to their names. The average libretto by Caldwell boasts all the lavish wit and humour of an essay on gastrohydrorrhea in cirrhosis of the liver. As for the lady's originality, one need not look further than two of her recent *opera*, "The Lady in Red" and "She's a Good Fellow." The former, we find, is a reboiling of the thrice-told tale of the artist who paints a fleetingly observed beauty in the nude, subsequently meets her, falls in love with her, is rebuffed, meets her again, listens to her sweet indignations, looks into her eyes, slashes the canvas, and so preserves her modesty—the whole embellished with such novel jests as "What is that painting?" "That is the painting of a chaste woman," "Well, if I had

seen her running around the woods with no more clothes on than that, I'd have chased her all right, all right." And the latter a reboiling of Robert Buchanan's venerable pre-Julian Eltinge farce, "The Strange Adventures of Miss Brown"—embellished with such not less novel *mots* as "What is your name, senorita?" "My name is Pepita Mosquito," "Well, somebody is going to get stung all right, all right." . . . And yet our theatrical managers stand in line outside the Caldwell's eighty-acre country estate, their pockets full of cheque books, patiently awaiting their turn to bid upon her masterpieces.

§ 70

Paragraph En Passant.—Not long ago, I went to see a piece called "The Ouija Board." Its author, so ran the advertisements, was one Crane Wilbur, a moving picture mime. Here, thought I, would be an evening of sour chuckles, an evening for low wheezes! I took my seat, and prepared myself. What I saw was a cheap melodrama, true enough, but one that revealed what is perhaps as shrewdly dexterous a melodrama hand as our theatre has seen in some time. Aside from Veiller's "Thirteenth Chair" and Eugene Walter's "The Knife," I recall no melodrama so successfully tricked. It is one of the curious phenomena of the theatre, indeed, that

makes a second act like that of this intrinsically piffleful melodrama twice as thrilling, twice as interest-holding, and twice as directly effective as the finest act the enormously superior Hervieu ever wrote. One doesn't customarily admit it, but it is true.

§ 71

Grand Prix.—The gold medal for the finest piece of dramatic criticism in an American newspaper in the last decade is hereby awarded to the New York *Globe* for the following excerpt from its published review of Zoë Akins' play "Papa":

"An author need not know what a play is. Neither need an audience. It is of no consequence what the play is, notwithstanding that in this particular case there is a sequence of comedy, and so far as we know there was no such word as 'amorality' until Miss Akins produced it. The impression the play leaves, the impression any play leaves, is of consequence. 'Papa' leaves one with impression of having overheard a story at a Fifth Avenue club of a man who had suddenly paid his dues long overdue being told by a man who knew he was talking to another clubman."

§ 72

The Rialto Sheridans.—The habitual effort of the second-cabin Rialto Sheridans is to dovetail the

suavity and manner of Clare Kummer with the broader and more positively provocative situation-humour of Winchell Smith. The regular result is a jerky vaudeville wherein the suavity and manner of Miss Kummer are achieved in such spectacles as that of a gentleman, about to write a letter, shaking a fountain pen upon the drawing-room carpet and wherein the situation-humour of Smith is vainly sought in such venerable *espiégleries* of the two-a-day as that of the woman who, desiring to make a touch, by way of preface proceeds against the male with numerous elaborately disarming kisses. Add to these tactics such devices as a revamping of the old nigger-act wherein a perfectly healthy man is made suddenly to feel ill through another's frightening chronicle of his various symptoms (with, incidentally, the ancient low-comedy hokum of big Latin words) and garnish further with such pleasantries as "I think it's my nerves"—"You mean your nerve," and one gets the picture.

§ 73

The Palmy Days; a compilation of facts from "The Life of Augustin Daly," by Joseph Francis Daly, published by the Macmillan Company, and dedicated "To All Lovers of the Stage and its Traditions."—

1. "A tight-rope dancer, John Milton Hengler, essays the character of Hamlet."—*Page 19.*

2. "Lola Montez deserts a royal admirer to court the sovereign public—without a qualification for the stage save notoriety—essays the rôle of danseuse and cannot dance—then essays the rôle of actress in a poor little hack play and cannot act."—*Page 20.*

3. " . . . the Revolutionary drama, a favourite entertainment in which one Yankee easily whipped half a dozen Britishers and in which George Washington always appeared with red fire in a final tableau."—*Page 20.*

4. "No watchful policeman kept the crowd in line at the box-office in those days. Three or four fists grasping money were thrust at one time through the tiny aperture in the boarded window. An invisible hand within grasped the fists in turn and released the money from the fingers. . . . Tickets and change would by the same unseen agent be then enclosed within the expectant fingers and the owner would back away after a terrific struggle and often with serious damage to his wardrobe. On one such occasion, our young friend Arnold, having donned a new frock coat, buttoned it up for the mêlée, and when he got to his seat found the garment had been split up the back!"—*Page 30.*

5. "In Daly's time, certain theatrical managers organized a boycott of the wealthiest of the daily papers on account of the tone of its criticisms. The Academy of Music led the war. . . . The chorus at the Academy had the 'villagers' in the opera promenade the stage with a figure dressed to represent the proprietor of the great daily, with his hand stretched behind him to indicate an itching palm."—*Page 34.*

6. "Madam Methua-Scheller supported Edwin Booth in 'Othello' with Bogumil Dawison speaking in German, Booth in English and herself in German-American."—*Page 37.*

7. "In his initial presentation of 'The Lady of Lyons,' William Wheatley, as Claude Melnotte, took the centre of the stage in the last scene and forced Pauline (down at left) to rush into his arms when he threw off his cloak and revealed his identity. Pauline did rush, tripped over her bridal gown and pitched head foremost at his feet with her legs high in the air."—*Page 38.*

8. "'The Black Crook' brought trainloads of people from every point of the compass to see the hundred pretty coryphées."—*Page 41.*

9. "'The British Blondes' irradiated the town."—*Same page.*

10. "Isabel Cubas, the Spanish dancer, with flaming eyes, dazzling teeth revealed in an eager smile, and sinuously moving arms . . . claimed the public notice." —*Same page.*

11. "Plays were altered to introduce the trick illusion called 'Pepper's Ghost.'"—*Same page.*

12. "Adah Isaacs Menken enrolled all the dramatic editors as 'chums' and 'pals.' She made fame for herself as Mazeppa in tights."—*Page 43.*

13. "George William Curtis, editor of *Harper's Weekly*, wrote 'Whenever and wherever you can, go and see 'Leah the Forsaken' and have the lesson burned in upon your mind which may save the national life and honour."—*Page 49.*

14. "Two *respectable* actors, Lewis Baker and Mark Smith, were lessees of the New York Theatre."—*Page 71.*

15. "The critical appreciation of this play ('Griffith Gaunt') by the leading journals was marked: 'A marvel of dramatic construction.'"—*Page 73.*

16. "The dramatic critics were so cordial in their praise of Daly's clever work that he gave them a dinner, at which they were all without exception his guests."—*Page 74.*

17. "The lease of the New York Theatre passed to William Worrell, a circus acrobat and clown."—*Page 74.*

18. "As we walked home one night, Daily said: 'I have got the sensation we want—a man fastened to a railroad track and rescued just as the train reaches the spot!'"—*Page 75.*

19. "When 'Under the Gaslight' was produced, the houses always were thronged. . . . An old theatregoer turned to those about him after a long drawn breath and said, 'It is the climax of sensation!'"—*Page 76.*

20. "With regard to its literary merit, the press pronounced Daly's 'A Flash of Lightning,' with its scene showing the burning of a North River steamboat, 'the master production of its author.'"—*Page 80.* (See paragraph 16.)

(*And so on to Page 659*)

§ 74

Belasco Sees the Light?—Highly venerated by the Broadway hazlitts as a *tour de force* in the realistic producing method, Belasco's production of "The Son-Daughter" actually achieved its most telling coup in the impressionistic producing method.

The first act and the second act of the play, staged in the familiar Belasco extra-realistic manner, were—even by the word of this hazlittry—not impressive. But the undeniable melodramatic effectiveness of the last act of the play was—in the two particular scenes most frequently commented upon in the daily journals—wholly and entirely due to Belasco's temporary rejection of realism and his reliance, instead, upon impressionism or, perhaps more accurately, relative impressionism or modified realism. In the first of these two scenes, a Chinese den, Belasco literally took a leaf from Gordon Craig and by the adroit employment of simple curtains and lights gained a far more remarkable effect of scenic depth, darkness and mystery than he had hitherto ever gained with his tons of Fourth Avenue delicatessen. The picture, disregarding the crude and idiotic traffic that passed within it, was dramatic in the extreme. And so with the one moment in the succeeding scene where the comparatively impressionistic method was permitted to take the place of the realistic. This second scene, depicting a Chinese wedding chamber, was heavy with all the Belasco extravagant "realism." A million dollars' worth of scenery cluttered up the stage. All that the scenery needed, so suggested the spectator's mind, was Al Jolson and a chorus. The action transpiring within this gaudy suite failed to move

the audience until—suddenly—Belasco divested his stage of its glaring literality, moved his protagonists behind partly transparent curtains, dramatized the lighting, and swung his action against the Appia-Lert silhouette-shadow frame. The effect was electric. The audience was held fascinated. In this second instance, of course, the impressionistic method was impressionistic not in the way the first instance was, but purely by comparison with what directly preceded and followed it. Yet it was by virtue of its relative impressionistic quality that it achieved the very effect believed by the local lessings to be due to the stereotyped Belasco realism.

§ 75

Woman: A Contribution toward a Conceivably Newer Dramatic Point of View.—Woman is of much coarser fibre, of much less delicate sensibility and romantic sensitiveness, than man. A woman of refinement may without shame conceivably love a wholesale cheese merchant, for instance, and marry him, and live with him happily, and be faithful to him, and bear him numerous future wholesale cheese merchants. But it is difficult to think of a man of like comparative refinement loving, without at least a flicker of shame, a woman who confessed to having loved—if only for a day of

her life—such a virtuoso of cheeses, however handsome, however noble of spirit, however intelligent.

* * *

That women are of a much cruder æsthetic, spiritual and emotional grain than men is attested to by the few women who, as compared with men, marry for love. It is perhaps not unfair to say that where four men out of five marry for love, not more than two women out of five marry for the same reason. A woman will marry a man for comfort, for money, for spite, for fear of coming age, because she has been jilted by some other man, for social reasons—for a score of reasons other than those prompted by the heart. And what is more, she will be happy with this man who is not the choice of her heart. And what is still more, as time goes on, she will convince herself that she *is* in love with him. A man may do these things, but never with the same self-respect that a woman can do them.

* * *

A woman declined by the man she loves and seeking sanctuary and solace in the embraces of her second choice is rarely the unhappy creature that common delusion insists she is. It is not the woman, but the second choice, for whom Tragi-Comedy, enwrapt in deceptive satins, waits open-armed in the wings.

* * *

The popular theory that danger adds zest to amour is perfumed with absurdity. While it may be true in the case of barbers, it is anything but true in the case of other men. I know. I've tried it.

Amour is only pleasant, only charming, when it is leisurely and comfortable. To scent it with danger is to delete it of its very sub-structure. The man who finds pleasure in making love to a woman with a vigilant husband or to a girl with a father who hides behind a drawing-room portière armed with a baseball bat is the kind of idiot who finds pleasure in seeing how near to the edge of the Grand Canyon he can balance himself without falling over. The most enjoyable love affair in the world would be one in which the woman was at once a widow and an orphan, and the man a Philip Nolan.

* * *

One of the strangest of the many common beliefs concerned with amour is that which maintains it an impossible thing for a man to be equally in love with two women at one and the same time. Doubtless originated by woman's own eternally assiduous Wilhelmstrasse and shrewdly disseminated for her own sly ends, the belief—for all its popularity with the ever sentimental, ballad-singing male of the species—wears a sour motley. The majority of men are in love with one woman, and one woman

only, simply because their acquaintanceship with women is so meagre, so bounded and confined, that they have not had the opportunity nor the good fortune to meet coincidentally another woman of equal charm and equal appeal. Since it is a matter of not infrequent occurrence for a man to fall in love with another woman after he has engaged himself to the one woman with whom he has believed himself singly in love, is it not perfectly reasonable to assume that had he initially met both women simultaneously he would have been taken with each of them equally?

The bachelor is a monument to women's charm. Unlike the married man, he offers up constant proof of the charm of several women as opposed, in the bigoted instance of the former agnostic, to the charm of one. The heart of a bachelor is a mirror in which every love, peering, sees the image of a love equally beautiful and equally bewitching. The heart of a married man is a mirror upon which lack of adventure and laziness have breathed their obscuring fogs.

* * *

Every woman, when she marries, fondly believes that she has married but one man: her lover-husband. It is only after a few years, upon looking one day wistfully out of the window, that she suddenly realizes that she committed bigamy.

* * *

A thing is charming in the degree that it is not true. The truth, nine times in ten, is ugly: but a lie, nine times in ten, is beautiful—or, at least, the flower of a beautiful gesture. The charming woman is not the woman who tells the truth beautifully, yet unconvincingly, but the one who tells a lie prettily and impressively. The charming man is the man who believes that she is lying when she is telling the truth and that she is telling the truth when she is lying. . . . What in all the world could be at once more charming, and less true, than "Der Rosenkavalier," or the Paris of Mürger, or the landscapes of Corot, or the memory of one's first sweetheart?

* * *

That woman who begins saying to a man, "I don't think you love me any more," and who reiterates it from time to time, is already beginning to fall out of love with him.

* * *

Love is never absolute, entire. In it, though it be as deep as the deepest sea, there is always elbow-room for a bit of a glance at some other man or woman.

* * *

A man is charming to women in the degree that he does not appeal to men. A woman is charming

to men in the degree that she does not appeal to women.

* * *

The ideal marriage is one contracted by a man and woman who have been jilted by their first loves. It is a marriage securely based upon defeat and disillusion, the only sound ground from which marriage may flower into mutual understanding, into the love that is comradeship, and into the sweet and lasting peace that is ever the child of rosemary.

* * *

Love, as the word has it, is impossible between an old man and a young girl not, as is commonly held, because youth seeks youth but more precisely because age seeks age. What a man over forty seeks in love is comfort—and this he may find only in one similarly seeking it. What a young girl seeks in love is a species of discomfort—and this she may find, readily enough, in an alliance with a man seeking comfort alone. A love that is comfortable is unknown to youth: when love becomes comfortable it is, to youth, no longer love. A young girl's love is of a piece with riding on a shoot-the-chutes, having a small fishbone lodge in the windpipe, and stepping suddenly from a warm room onto a snow-covered balcony.

(a) Love is the emotion that a woman feels al-

ways for a poodle dog and sometimes for a man. (b) Marriage is based on the theory that when a man discovers a particular brand of beer exactly to his taste he should at once throw up his job and go to work in the brewery.

* * *

What passes for woman's intuition is more often intrinsically nothing more than man's transparency. To argue that there is something almost occult in a woman's instinctive divination of the fact that a man likes her is to argue that there is something almost occult in a rat's instinctive divination of the fact that, close at hand, there is a piece of cheese.

* * *

No woman has ever loved a man so truly and deeply that she has not at some time permitted herself the thought of the pleasurable heart-ache his death would bring to her.

* * *

To a man, the least interesting of women is the successful woman, whether successful in work, or in love, or on the mere general gaudy playground of life. A man wants a woman whose success is touched, however faintly, with failure. The woman who is sure, resolute and successful, he may want for an associate in business, a friend and a

confidante, a nurse or a housekeeper, but never for a sweetheart.

* * *

The most gracious heroine of life, as of drama, is the poor girl—and for a simple reason. Money gives a woman confidence, and confidence is the deadliest enemy of a woman's attractiveness and allure. Money gives a woman a sense of security; it steals from her all of her charming little Cinderella wishes; it envelops her with a pampered air; it makes her, if however vaguely, self-conscious. Such a woman no man can take into his arms without some slight, undefined feeling of restraint. When a man embraces for the first time the woman he loves, he first embraces the child in her and then the woman herself. The poor girl is always a child before the great world, with its surprises and hopes and treasures. The rich girl, however young, is always a woman.

* * *

The notion that as man grows older his illusions leave him is not quite true. What is true is that his early illusions are supplanted by new and, to him, equally convincing illusions. The man of forty-five has just as many illusions as the boy of eighteen, but they are different illusions. The man of ninety, dying, carries with him to the grave, if not the boyhood illusion of one woman's love, the

senescent illusion of all women's faithlessness, and if not the boyhood illusion of the goodness of Santa Claus, the senescent illusion of the goodness of God.

* * *

Marriage defeats and humbles the man since it soon or late robs him of his greatest bulwark, *viz.*, vanity. The man who is no longer vain is a man already beaten. The man who is no longer proud of himself, who is no longer possessed of a pretty, healthy conceit, is a man slipping into the living grave. The vanity so essential to his happiness and well being, marriage takes from him. However great his success in material things, marriage, like the steady dropping of water, gradually wears down his antecedent self-pride and self-glory. The married man is the man whom romance has vanquished. He is a Cornwallis at Yorktown. He is the corpse of a bachelor.

* * *

The common theory that a woman who marries her second choice is more or less a creature for pity is as hollow as most theories cherished by the great yokelry. Not only is the woman not to be pitied; she is rather to be envied and congratulated. A woman's first choice—the man closest to her heart and the one who, had the Fates been kind. she

would have gained for mate—is generally a man much less suited to the profession of husband than the temporarily spurned fellow in whom—as second choice—she eventually seeks solace. The first choice is more often than not a gaudy Romeo, good-looking, fun-loving, engaging, witty—but without the substantial qualities possessed by the second choice. These substantial qualities, in the youthful game of romance and amour, do not appeal to the woman: they seem commonplace and unattractive to her as against the easy flash and graceful glitter of her other love. But they are the qualities that make a husband if not a lover. And, having married them, as the years pass by and romance dies out of the world, the woman achieves a peace, a contentment and a happiness that her first choice, had she married it, would never have given her. A woman's first choice belongs not to her maturer years; it belongs to that green and sunlit period of her life when all the world sings a wonderful music, and the clouds are made of cotton. It is for youth, and passion, and gay colours, and the moon. The second choice, the sounder choice, is for the later years when the rain begins to fall. It is the choice for home, for comfort, and for grateful peace.

* * *

The young woman most attractive to men is not, as is claimed, the completely innocent young

woman, but the young woman who, though anything but completely innocent, still looks as if she were completely innocent. The completely innocent young woman—granting that there still exists such an animal—is approximately as interesting to a man as a Sunday School. It is the Encyclopedia Britannica dressed in baby blue with eyes downcast and a hurt mouth who grabs us as sure as there's a hell!

* * *

The theory that a woman loves most the kind of man she can mother vouchsafes, like the majority of blanket amorous assumptions, a number of glaring holes, and one glarer in particular. A woman does not love a man because she can mother him; she mothers him because she can love him. The man-mothering instinct is predicated wholly upon the sweetheart-mistress instinct. A woman no more cares about mothering a man whom she does not love (whether that love is complete or perhaps yet only in an incipient stage) than she cares about kissing the first street-car conductor she meets. Even the woman who takes up the profession of nursing —the professional mother—nurses most carefully, most solicitously and most eagerly that man in the ward whose hair is the smoothest and whose eyes, felt in hers, are most nearly the shade of William Faversham's.

* * *

Whatever the proficiency of the American in other and lesser fields of enterprise, it is an acknowledged fact that in the art of writing the love letter he is a lugubrious doodle. The love letter written by the Don Juan of the United States—and I speak not of the amateur, but of the comparative crack shot—is as inefficient as a trombone player with tuberculosis. It may succeed—as it does succeed—in snaring a quarry of shop-girls, upper West Side widows, Vassar left-overs, pie-faced débutantes and other such already eager, willing and easily grabable sparrows, but it is seldom, if ever, that it contrives to wing a genuine canary. Nine-tenths of the most desirable young American women marry foreigners—Englishmen, Frenchmen, Italians, etc.—not because the latter are more handsome bipeds than the American (they are generally not so pulchritudinous), nor because they are wealthier (they seldom have nearly so much money), but because they excel the American in the arts of amour, and, more particularly, in the important technical art of the love letter. The American girl who can resist the drive of the love letter of an Englishman can resist the drive of a magnum of champagne. The American girl who can resist that of the love letter of a Frenchman can resist a gallon of whiskey. The American girl who can politely retain her balance after reading the love

letter of an Italian can walk a chalk line after inhaling a keg or two.

The Latin understands the great secret of the *billet doux.* Where the American—and not infrequently the Englishman—writes his love letter from the point of view of the time when he composes it, the Latin always writes his from the point of view of the time when his inamorata will receive it. Thus, the Anglo-Saxon writing his beloved at eleven in the morning, writes an eleven a. m. point of view letter. And, thus, the beloved in due time receiving the letter at twilight or eventide or late night, and finding herself in the twilight or eventide or late night mood, coincidentally finds the eleven a. m. point of view letter as jarring as a 1904 model Peerless and approximately as persuasive as a locomotive whistle.

The Latin never commits this mistake. His love letter is ever devised and composed, not from the time of its mailing, but from the time of its receipt. He figures as closely as he can the hour at which his girl will get the letter, and he writes the letter with that hour, and the girl's associated mood, in mind. It is a strategical technique that no woman, black or white, can withstand. In every such letter there is mailed synchronously, for the convenient use of the girl addressed, a white flag.

* * *

The most loyal and faithful woman indulges her imagination in a hypothetical liaison whenever she dons a new street frock for the first time.

* * *

A girl should go to church regularly. To a ritualistic, not an evangelical church, however. The adventure softens her, makes her lovelier, makes her more charming. A girl leaving St. Patrick's is twice as lovely as when she enters. There is a charming wonder in her eyes, a new sweetness and music in her soul. The ritualistic church takes the hardness out of a girl's eyes and heart; it perfumes her with a touch of spirituality that is pleasing to men. The evangelical church, to the contrary, turns her into a sour-ball, a woman with the flash of acid in her eyes and the set of a bear-trap to her teeth. But the other church! What man can resist the allure of a woman who has knelt before high, candle-lit altars with the rays of dying suns falling upon her from stained-glass? What man can fail to love a woman who has listened, hushed, for many years to great organs and to soft and rhythmical Latin prayers, and has knelt at vespers in great, dim, majestic cathedrals? Let the dog step up!

* * *

There are two times in a man's life when he particularly needs the ear of a friend: (1) when he has

just lost his old girl, and (2) when he has just got a new one.

* * *

The beauty of even the most beautiful woman is a comically insecure and fragile thing. The beauty of Helen herself could not have survived so absurdly simple a trial as a combination of red and pink, or wet hair, or circular striped stockings, or a mosquito bite on the eyelid.

* * *

Woman, with exception so rare that it is negligible, admires intelligence in man only in so far as this intelligence is confined to his dealings and enterprises with other men in the world of men. She has a disrelish for the man who is intelligent in her own presence, in his relations with her. She likes to know that he is intelligent, but indirectly, at second-hand. The man who exercises his intelligence in the presence of a woman may gain a friend or a wife, but never a sweetheart.

* * *

The chief rock upon which a lasting friendship rests is a strong mutual belief in the same general fallacies and falsehoods.

* * *

Woman's function in social and cardiac enterprise is, primarily, as an audience. A man ad-

mires a woman not for what she says, but for what she listens to. The more attentively and sympathetically she remains silent before his oracular nonsenses, the more beautiful she seems to him, and the more he loves her, and the sooner he marries her. The girl with the patient ear-drum is the girl who first nabs a husband.

* * *

There are, as women quickly sense, two distinct types of men. All men may be set down as of the one type or the other. Men are either cheap men or they are not cheap men. The classification has little to do with birth, with family, with education or social position or wealth. But each man nonetheless wears a tag conspicuous, revelatory and unmistakable. A man is either an essential gentleman or an essential bounder. I know a man born of one of the blue-blood American families, educated at a great university, rich and conspicuous in the smart metropolitan life, whose soul is the soul of a bounder. I know a cigar dealer in Broadway, an old man born God knows where and without education or fortune, who has the soul of a gentleman. I know men high in affairs, high in society, high in the estimation of the country, who are muckers; I know a seedy middle-aged man who makes keys to fit my doors, my humidor and my ice-box for fifty

cents apiece who has something of the purple in his heart.

A man may be red or yellow or black or white, he may be high or low or rich or poor, but he bears the one brand or the other. Pause a moment and consider the men you know intimately. They drop, one by one, into the one groove or the other as surely, and as relentlessly, as the balls in so many Japanese rolling games.

* * *

One of the most fecund and persistent myths of amour is that which maintains that a man, once he is taken with a woman, is intrigued in the degree that she affects indifference toward him. The truth, of course, is that while such indifference, whether honest or assumed, may actually contrive to keep him stepping lively for a short spurt, it very soon thereafter causes him suddenly to halt and get out of the race altogether. The clever woman, desiring to ensnare a man, realizes that the best way to get him is to throw away all the traditional feminine weapons and subterfuges and frankly and openly, yet charmingly, tell him that she likes him. The man thus handled, all folk-lore to the contrary, is won—and absolutely. The indifference tactic may in the end achieve some vagrom boob, but it has never yet in the history of the world

gained for a woman a single desirable, first-rate man.

* * *

However charming the American woman, there is about her always one thing that keeps that charm from true perfection. Unlike the French woman, she is unable to flirt with two men at the same time without causing one of the men to regard her as being just a trifle vulgar.

* * *

The flapper of today differs from the young girl of yesterday not in that, unlike her sister of yesterday, she is hep to all the esoteric subjects, but in that, unlike her sister of yesterday, she is hep to all the maidenly artifices which successfully conceal from men her hepness to those subjects.

* * *

The notion that the dog is an ever-faithful animal and will plough twenty miles through a driving snowstorm with a keg of schnapps tied to his neck in order to rescue his master, no matter how ill the latter may on a forgiven occasion have treated him, is perhaps somewhat sweeter than true. A dog loves a master who treats him kindly, gives him plenty to eat, pets him, warms him with comfortable blankets and tricks him out with pretty collars. But a dog will turn from that master if the latter neglects for a space of time to coddle him,

to look out for his well-being, and to pat him occasionally on the head. So, in each instance, will a woman. The American notion that a dog is in this respect superior to a woman is perhaps an exaggerated one.

* * *

Woman is most lovable when there has just occurred in her life something that saddens her. No man has ever loved a woman passionately at that moment in her life when she was happiest.

* * *

A man, looking back over the bridge of the years, always sentimentalizes his first love affair. A woman always gives hers the laugh.

* * *

The greatest happiness is that of imminent, but not yet quite realized, achievement. To be about to succeed—that is true happiness. To have succeeded—that is to be in the Pschorr brewery, with diabetes.

* * *

What makes a man fall in love with a girl? A noble character? A tender disposition? An alert mind? Womanly sympathy? A fine integrity? Dependability? Gentleness, kindness, charitableness? The fact that she is a fit potential mother for his children? Perhaps, but I doubt it. I doubt that a man often falls in love with a girl for any of

such more or less sound, accepted reasons. What generally gets him is something much less granted, something entirely superficial, something—when viewed after the years—that seems almost absurd. Looking back over the girls I have been in love with, I recall that I fell in love, as the phrase goes, with one because I was fetched by the smooth quality of her speaking voice, with three others because they wore lace or linen baby collars, with one because she stole up behind me one night at a rather formal dance and tickled my ear, with still another because, when drinking a glass of water, she had a habit of holding the glass with both palms, with still another because she had the knack of keeping her pretty hair up without hairpins, and with another still because she had a trick of saying the most unimportant and innocent things to me in a very low voice, as if dangerous spies were lurking all about us. I am an idiot, you say? Undoubtedly. But, unlike you, I am an *honest* idiot.

* * *

Most alluring to men is that woman whose wickedness has to it a touch of the angelic and whose virtue a touch of the devil.

* * *

The instinct of the married man to dally with a woman other than his wife or of a married woman to flirt with some man other than her husband is not

in the least the vicious instinct we are sometimes asked to believe. It is natural and, above natural, innocent. When one grows used to a person, or to a thing, the human impulse is ever toward experiment in some other and fresher direction. The man who has been married to a woman for a number of years, who has lived with her, has played upon all her whims and moods, knows her every response to every act, recognizes in advance her every gesture and every tone, is like the man who has owned a piano and has played upon it for the same long length of time. The moment he enters a house with another piano in it, he feels like trying the new one. There isn't a man or woman living who hasn't experienced the innocent wish to try someone's else piano. And there are few married men or women who haven't in a similar way experienced the innocent wish to try someone's else kiss.

* * *

A woman dislikes sentiment in a man in the degree that she is pretty.

* * *

The sweetest memory is that which involves something which one should not have done; the bitterest, that which involves something which one should not have done, and which one did not do.

* * *

The man with a bald head, however eminent his

position, always feels slightly ill at ease in the presence of a man whose dome is still well thatched. He feels, however much he may try not to, just a trifle handicapped and inferior. In the presence of a pretty woman, he feels himself called upon to exercise twice the pains of the fellow with hair. The man whose head looks like a freshly laid egg is, in woman's society, ever either Malvolio or Yorick.

* * *

The girl subsequently alleges with tears that the man had given her hope in the matter of marriage. The man subsequently recalls to himself, by way of supporting his self-respect, that the girl in turn had given *him* hope in that she professed elaborately not to desire, but even to disdain, that hope for marriage.

* * *

A woman is charming in the degree of her reaction to a charming man.

* * *

The greatest burden of Prohibition will fall upon amour. Without the friendly co-operation of alcohol, love-making—to the only kind of man that interests a woman—will be a difficult and awkward business. Without a few cocktails cavorting in his middle, a man embarking upon the preliminaries of amour feels too idiotic to continue. His mind is too clear for a business that, however de-

lightful, is intrinsically always banal and silly. His amorous words fall upon his own ears in all their stenciled gauntness. They lack the carelessness, the ardour, the thoughtlessness essential to them and to the great game, qualities that—save in the case of a professional actor, a clergyman or a Frenchman—only a touch of alcohol can bequeath to them. Love-making is a sort of boozy human music, and it can be played only, in the instance of an adult man, upon a key-board of mellifluous beverages.

* * *

The contention that women are more intelligent than men (a favourite hokum of such amateurs of the sex as Mencken) has never succeeded in exciting me. That the contention sells books, gains for its sponsor many free deviled ham sandwiches and pots of tea flavoured with rum, and achieves for him a fine reputation for sagacity, open-mindedness and chivalry, I—privy to the enviable facts—am not one to deny. But that it is grounded in truth—that seems to me another matter. The truth is that while women as a class are not so intelligent as men, they are, by virtue of their superior histrionic faculties, able with extraordinary success to make themselves appear so. It is this histrionism that deceives the amateurs. When a male bl [illegible] female blockhead get together, the

male blockhead keeps his mouth wide open and permits it to betray the news of his blockheadedness. The female blockhead keeps hers closed, winks sagaciously about nothing, droops a lovely blue eye with an empty, but vastly effective, dubiety, negotiates an impressively inscrutable smile, and thus leads the eavesdropping menckens to believe that she is fully privy to the lewd asininity of the fellow.

The platitude that all the good dressmakers and cooks are men, not women, doesn't interest me. That men should succeed over women in such professions as these, which are customarily held to be the especial province of women, has nothing to do with the question of relative intelligence: it assuredly takes no Socrates or Gladstone to make a pretty Peter Thomson or a fine cheese pie: the circumstance that men are better in these fields than women would, indeed, seem to prove that the argument of the amateurs is sound. But, for all the agreeable paradoxes, the fact remains that, save in the single instance of the conflict of sex, the best woman is the inferior of the second-best man. Women's intelligence is emotional intelligence: it is showy, appealing, moving, and generally gains its ends: but if this is sound intelligence then every highball is a Bismarck, every hypnotist a Huxley. The woman does not argue with a man's mind, but

with his eye and his heart—as an actress, playing a colourful and sympathetic rôle, argues. No woman in the history of the world has yet substituted, in her arguments with the male, facts for nose varnish or sharp philosophy for talc and perfume. Woman is the Jap of the sexes: she is shrewd, clever, wily and, nine times in ten, gets what she goes after. Man is the German.

* * *

The secret of dressing in such wise that the picture shall subtly appeal to men, few young women understand. The true secret—as any man who stops momentarily to reflect and analyze will agree—is for the young woman to dress like a poor country girl expensively.

* * *

A man, weary of the chill and commonplace of his surroundings, seeks the Riviera for pretty new scenery, warmth and quiet. A man thus also seeks woman.

* * *

The trouble with girls is not that one gets tired of them, but that one doesn't. This is the true cause of a man's unhappiness. The popular view is that a man is chronically unable to love a girl long, that he tires of her in due time, and that he is then eager to get rid of her as soon as he can. This is sometimes the case. But more often the

opposite is true. He does not get tired of the girl; he continues to like her; he doesn't want to lose her; and his troubles begin.

* * *

The effect of cocktails—or any other alcoholic beverage—upon women is curiously unlike the effect of such tonics upon men. Take, for example, the relation of the effect of alcoholic indulgence to amour. A man and a woman, mutually intrigued, are seated at the table. The man drinks a cocktail, then another, then another, then another. With each successive tipple he becomes more and more excited over the charms of his fair companion, more and more eloquent, more and more eager to imprint a smack behind her little pink sea-shell of an ear. As one cocktail follows its predecessor down his alimentary canal, he waxes amorous *crescendo, fortissimo.* But consider now the woman.

After her first cocktail, she is in a mood precisely like the mood of the man after *his* first cocktail. After the second, she is in a mood precisely like the man after *his* second. But comes now the curious change. Though his third cocktail increases the man's ardour, her third cocktail almost instantaneously decreases the woman's. As if struck by a ghostly streak of lightning, as if touched by some occult hand, the woman's mood

suddenly achieves a certain restraint, a peculiar rigidity, a trace of coolness. The man's third cocktail has sent his acumen packing; the woman's third has brought her acumen back with a rush. She is lit, true enough—as lit as the man—but she is yet, by some esoteric phenomenon, again master of him and of the situation.

All of which is respectfully submitted to such teetotaler moralists as believe that when a woman has had three cocktails she is completely in the villain's power and ripe for the Italianos.

* * *

The most successful technique that a man may employ with a woman is to show interest in her but appear not to care.

* * *

It takes very, very little to make a woman snicker at a worthy man. Let a man be soever noble, soever upright, profound, charming and eloquent, if he happens to have on a collar a size too large for him, he is lost.

* * *

The notion that a pretty girl is prettier if she doesn't know that she is pretty is a sour chestnut. If a pretty girl doesn't know that she is pretty, she ruins her prettiness with carelessly selected colours and with snap-judgment hats and frocks. If she appreciates her prettiness, she commits no such

mistake, but carefully—even painstakingly—heightens her prettiness with colours, hats and frocks that melt harmoniously into her prettiness. The pretty girl who is unaware of her prettiness may be a charming girl, but she is never one-half so pretty as the equally pretty girl who knows that she is pretty.

* * *

When the estimable Bell conceived the idea for the telephone, little did the good old soul reckon that it would turn out, in time, to be an innocent and unwitting agent in the dealing of the deuce to the young female of the species. That, more than any other thing, the telephone has been instrumental in bringing the young woman of today to a point where her grandmother wouldn't recognize her, that it is in no little degree responsible for her increasingly loose manners and looser habits, any mother who takes the time to analyze the situation will doubtless agree.

Before the introduction of the telephone into general family use, the young girl of the house, meeting her young man in the paternal parlour, was naturally subject to the nervousness, shyness, bashfulness, etc., common on such occasions to nine well-bred young women out of every ten. After weeks of such conferences the friendship of the twain would progress so far as the hand-holding stage;

after months, so far as the first kiss; after a year or two, probably so far as the proposal of marriage. The great barriers to intimacy that modesty, awkwardness and personal idiosyncrasy and reserve always throw up operated here; and our mothers thus took so long to bring our fathers around with the ring that we children, as yet unborn and so comprehending the drollery of love, almost gave up in despair our chances of ever seeing the Ziegfeld "Follies" and Ernest Poole initiated into an American Institute of Arts and Letters.

These barriers the telephone gradually did away with, broke down. It is not so easy—nor so safe—to look a man in the eye and tell him to go to hell as it is to drop a nickel in a slot at 206th Street, call up Rector ten miles away, and then do it. Similarly, it is not so easy for a flapper to sit next to a man on a sofa and, without blushing, tell him to press his ruby lips to hers. The telephone gives the flapper courage—and more. It conceals blushes; it gives the strength that is always afforded by remoteness: it removes, in a sense, the personal equation. It permits a girl to lie in her bed and talk with a man lying in *his* bed; it permits her, half-clothed, to talk with him a moment after its ring has made him hop nude out of his bathtub. Its delicate suggestiveness is not lost in these instances. Its whisper is the whisper of the clandestine note

of the 1870's hidden in the hole of the old oak; its voice is the voice of the chaperon asleep. The most modest girl in America, the girl who blushes even at a man's allusion to his chilblains, once she gets her nose in a telephone mouth-piece acquires a sudden and surprising self-assurance and aptitude at wheeze. Every time a young girl calls up a man for the first time, the devil instructs Tyson to lay aside for him, a year hence, a seat in the first row.

* * *

How little it takes to make the beautiful ridiculous: two flies engaged in amour on the nose of the finest Rembrandt . . . Washington's farewell to his men read aloud by a veteran of the Home Guard of 1917–18 . . . a lovely woman engaging an asparagus . . .

* * *

§ 76

The American Who Would Be Artist.—The American is not content to make his millions. He desires, once he has made them, to surround their achievement with a measure of glamour. To be regarded simply as an excellent and very successful business man is not wholly pleasant to him. Thus he seeks, by all the coggery of which he is capable, to lift the medium of his fortune to a loftier

and gaudier level. Thus does he call his movies an art, and himself an artist. Thus does he call upholstering the insides of automobiles an art, and himself an artist. Thus does he call interior decoration, the manufacture of Ming lamps, the laying out of a seemly front lawn, the management of a theatre, dressmaking, hair-waving and innumerable like trades, each and all arts. Throw a plate of soup out of one of the front windows of Delmonico's at any time of the day and it will spatter the waistcoats of at least three such "artists." Open the advertising section of any popular magazine at random and you will face the news that the making of Rochester ready-to-wear suits is an art; that "Since the first law of art is unity, and since the principle applies in painting, sculpture, architecture or the more popular forms of commercial design, the designers of the Paige Motor Car—men of true artistic taste—have achieved their effects through strict conformation with this law: a mere glance at our graceful Sedan Car will convince you that it is justified by all artistic standards"; that the American Face Brick Association's bricks are "artistic" bricks; that Libby's Apple Butter is not a jam, a jelly or a marmalade, but an Art; that Greenbaum and Herzog, Inc., are the manufacturers of the Art Shirtwaist; that "year by year the creative genius of Apperson Brothers has enriched

the automobile artistically"; that Phillips, Blumblatt and Toohey, of Buffalo, N. Y., are "the Artists of Floor Varnish"; that the Mohegan Rubber Company makes Art Tires; that "Childs' savoury salads are culinary works of art," that . . .

But have a look for yourself.

§ 77

The Chinese Play.—The formula for the manufacture of the popular Oriental-Occidental play is to take some such conventional popular play dealing with the intermarriage of Jew and Christian as "The House Next Door," put a kimono on Sadie Rosenbaum, change her name to Wah Tsu, inject into the manuscript a number of allusions to flower boats, sing-song girls, honourable ancestors and the American immigration laws, and offer the whole with a sub-title announcing it a study in the contrasting customs and morals of the East and the West.

§ 78

The Spectator and the Love Scene.—On watching a love scene enacted upon the stage, it is necessary for the less ingenuous spectator mentally to engaud and beautify the actress heroine (where the spectator is a man) or the actor hero (where the

spectator is a woman) if the spectator's emotionalization by the scene is to be insured. The spectator is not magnetized by such a scene unless the man or the woman participating in it is the man or the woman whom the spectator would wish as his or her vis-à-vis in a similar actual scene. In four instances out of five, the actor playing the hero or the actress playing the heroine is not up to the palate of the spectator's heart: the spectator must half close the eyes of his or her imagination and dream into the actress' slippers a girl of his own fancy, or into the actor's boots her own personal taste in Don Juans and sweethearts.

§ 79

Critic and Creation.—It is not a sound argument to contend against the critic who has himself never done other creative work that he is, because of this, a weak vessel with a hole in his bottom. A man may be at once an excellent critic of the arts and a nonentity in the creation of one of them. Yet though this may be true, the records of fact fail to disclose a single first-rate critic who was himself not more or less authentically proficient in other creative enterprise.

§ 80

Psychic Research on the Stage.—Psychic research in the drama is confined very largely to a prestidigitation of baby spotlights, dimmer-boxes and gray veiling. Add to such Belasco *diablerie* the character of a bewhiskered physician who meditatively raps his thumb with his *pince-nez* and plays attorney to the low snickerers out front by observing that he doesn't believe in the authentic occult properties of the aforesaid baby spotlights, dimmer boxes and gray veiling—add further amid a great din of tin-sheet shaking and Kliegl lightning flashes a sudden view of the deceased heroine through a transparent gauze aperture over the mantel-piece—and you have the average exhibit that passes current for an impressive drama of psychic phenomena.

§ 81

Récipé.—A good theatre should be like the library of an amiable and cultivated man: it should possess all the virtues of such a library, and all the pleasant little vices. It should not be devoted largely to the classics: a library composed largely of the classics is the mark of the nouveau or the dusty-head. It should display what is best in the old, for that is always fresh; it should display what

is best of the new, for that is always arresting; it should contain also the agreeable unimportant trifles that go to chase away thought and soberness with loud, low chuckles. It should be a theatre, like the library, upon whose shelves stand in juxtaposition reflection and belly laughter, poetry and gay, low fig-stuff, wit and the torpedo bat, imagination, honest sentiment, searching comment, and fair and lovely frontispieces. It would show upon its shelves in close proximity Aristophanes and "Anatol," Bahr and Bickel, Corneille and Irene Castle, Donnay and Max Dearly, Echegaray and "Erdgeist," Feydeau and the "Follies," Goethe and Lady Gregory, Hauptmann and Raymond Hitchcock, Ibsen and "The Importance of Being Earnest," "Justice" and Justine Johnston, "Königskinder" and "The King," Lemaître and "Le Veau d'Or," Molière and Kathleen Martyn, "Narrentanz" and "No, but I got a sister Lena," "Othello" and "Oh Boy," the "Playboy of the Western World" and "Pour Avoir Adrienne," Quedenfeld and the "Queen of the Moulin Rouge," Rostand and Rip, Shakespeare and Sam Scribner's Burlesquers, Thoma and "The Tyranny of Tears," "Und Pippa Tanzt" and "Unges Forbund," Vollmöller and Verneuil, Wedekind and the "Wife Without a Smile," Yeats and "Youth," Zola and

Zamacois. It should, like his library, take the man's culture for granted. It should interest, divert and amuse, not educate. It should, with its fond rememorations and reflections, be as an old trunk in the attic of his mind or, with its lively beauties and humours, as a sudden cocktail.

§ 82

The Cinema.—The circumstance that the human voice is lacking from the motion picture is not quite the crushing fetch that the motion picture's critics believe. They cannot confound the artistic pretensions of the cinema with such an argument. Pantomime may aspire to authentic artistic heights. But the motion picture is not pantomime. It is, at best, semi-pantomime. It is pantomime interrupted at frequent intervals by the guide-posts, legends, sign-boards and proscenium placards called, in the cinema argot, titles and inserts. It is no more pantomime than a street beggar with a card reading, "I am deaf and dumb; please help me," fastened to his thorax, is pantomime. It is, in a word, pantomime with a typographical *compère* standing in the footlight trough and telling the audience every other minute what it is all about.

§ 83

An American Translation.—Vox populi, vox dei: The voice of the people is the voice of the gallery god.

§ 84

The Drama of Ideas.—The America "drama of ideas," of which one hears much, may be said to be grounded upon the following irrevocable ideology: the idea that every American traveling in a foreign land, however beguiling and beautiful, cherishes an overpowering desire to return immediately to his small home town in Indiana; the idea that all persons placed on trial before the law, particularly those accused of murder, are guiltless; the idea that the sudden recollection of one's mother is enough to restrain one from tampering with a beautiful married woman; the idea that the accumulation of great wealth inevitably brings with it great unhappiness; the idea that all poor girls are virtuous; the idea that whenever a villain succeeds in getting hold of a hero's revolver and subsequently, after taunting the hero, essays to shoot him, the villain is always frustrated through the fact that the hero has exercised the precaution either to remove the cartridges or to load the gun with blanks; the idea that a thirty-year-old actor in a

white nightshirt kneeling beside a bed saying "Now I lay me down to sleep" in a deep bass voice is the estranged couple's six-year-old son Adolph; the idea that when a trivial fire breaks out in a remote corner of the city the skies for miles around are promptly suffused with a deep crimson glow; and the idea that the play is worth three dollars.

§ 85

Theatre.—An institution devoted to programs advertising phonographs, union suits, perfumes, chewing-gums, corsets, scalp treatments and restaurants, to candy slot-boxes, Red Cross meetings, Drama League conventions, Sunday concerts, benefits for destitute actors and managers, the influenza, classic-dancing matinées, book-stalls, presentations of tokens of esteem to Ada Rehan and old crippled press-agents, coat-checking leases, tonsilitis, sheet-music sales, war saving stamp speeches, Lowney's chocolates, lectures on Rabindranath Tagore and, occasionally, drama.

§ 86

The Theatrical Manager and the Immigrant.—The immigrant, as I used to see it, was one upon whom the American theatrical manager laid the

blame for his own deficiencies. Was the grade of American theatrical entertainment becoming lower with each successive year? Then the blame was Herman Kraus', who had come over in the steerage from Bunzlau, Leon Przkwzi's, who had come over as a stokers' chambermaid from Novograd Volynsk, and Giacomo Spumenti's, who hailed from Boscotrecasi. Well, there may have been something in it: I am not sure. Yet the fact remains that when the war put an end to immigration the quality of American dramatic fare materially improved. Again, perhaps immigration has nothing to do with the case: personally, I believe that it has utterly nothing to do with it. Perhaps the Messrs. Kraus, Przkwzi and Spumenti, become moderately opulent from their divers trades, are themselves responsible for the happy change. Perhaps now that the ban on immigration is again lifted and the immigrants are again vouchsafed three or four years to fatten off the delicatessen, pants-pressing and shoe-shining arts, the finer American theatre will prosper three and four-fold.

§ 87

Comedy and Tragedy.—The writing of comedy calls for a higher experience, education and culture than the writing of tragedy. Comedy is the

flower of sophistication, introspection, philosophy and disillusion; tragedy more often the sudden weed, however arresting, of emotionalism, sentimentality and metaphysical amaurosis. There are always, at all times, such exceptions as Shakespeare. Yet where, on the planes far below, a second-rate man may write an impressive tragedy like "The Marquis de Priola," one will never find but a first-rate man writing a searching comedy like "Anatol." It has so happened that the writer of great tragedy and fine comedy has at times been one and the same physiological unit. But it has never even then, for all the outward look of the fellow, been the same man.

§ 88

The Superior English.—The English compose the only modern race whose degree of civilization is sufficiently high to permit it to enjoy a good laugh at its own expense in the dramatic theatre. The Frenchman insists that he be theatrically pictured to himself as a noble patriot: any other picture, save it be of himself as an irresistible *chevalier aux dames*, is unwelcome to him. The German does not mind a satirical picture of himself, but the satire must be obvious, must be laid on heavily with a broom, or he will not stomach it. To pic-

ture an Irishman or a Jew save as a creature of all the virtues, or an American save as a world conqueror, is to bring cobwebs to the window of the box-offiee. The Englishman alone relishes a devastating X-ray of himself. Or, if he does not relish it, alone amiably tolerates it.

§ 89

Technique and Charm.—Perhaps not more often than once in every twenty years do we have the spectacle of an actress naturally without charm victoriously surmounting the deficiency by means of a finished technique. In the general run, the charming actress without much technical equipment is the theatrical superior of the negative actress amply equipped. So long as the theatre lasts, an actress like Laurette Taylor, as rich in charming personality as she is poor in technical resource, will ever be a more effective actress than one like Margaret Anglin, who is as deficient in the personal quality as she is proficient in the technical. There are actresses like Sarah Bernhardt and Eleonora Duse who possess the two in combination: they are the accepted great actresses of their day. There are others like Ethel Barrymore and Gladys Cooper who possess a plenitude of the former quality and a moderate amount of the latter: they are

the idolized actresses of their day. There are still others like Marietta Olly and Carlotta Nillson who possess only the latter—and they, most often, are the failures.

§ 90

Farce.—Of all the forms of playwriting, farce is the most often underestimated. Yet of all the forms it is perhaps the most difficult of successful execution. The very word *farce* is a dangerous prefatory challenge: it is to the playwriting form which it stands for what the preface "Here's a funny story," is to the narration of an anecdote. Tell a man that you are about to make him jump, shoot off a pistol behind him and, for all your disarming introduction, he *will* jump. That is the way with melodrama. Tell a man that you are about to move him emotionally, have the musicians play the last movement of Brahms' third symphony and, for all your disarming introduction, he *will* be moved. That is the way with drama. But tell a man that you are about to make him laugh, and, for all the juiciness of your wheeze, your prefatory challenge will have more or less straightened out his face against you. That is the way with farce . . . This is why I hold de Caillavet and de Flers artists superior to every contemporary French dramatist save Rostand and de Curel—and in a few isolated

instances, Hervieu—and why I regard Margaret Mayo's "Baby Mine" a finer performance in dramatic composition than the best propaganda melodrama that Brieux has ever written or the best emotional drama that has thus far been manufactured by the Times Square Brieux, Augustus Thomas.

§ 91

The Art of Dramatic Criticism, As Practised by the New York Times:—

"The last act fairly swarms with children, and it would come ungraciously from a playgoer who sat through it with a lump in his throat not to bear witness to its genuine appeal. Perhaps, however, you are not moved when you see a score of kids marching two by two through the streets, with bobbing Sisters of Mercy acting as right guide and file closers. Perhaps it does not choke you up a little when, from some high-walled school yard, you hear suddenly the shrill clamour of children at recess. . . . If it does not, 'Five O'Clock' would have no particular call upon your sympathies."

§ 92

The Polish Drama.—Of all modern national drama, that of the Poles is the worst. There is little in it, from first to last, that equals even the third-grade British or American, which would

seem to touch bottom. Jerzy Zulawski, perhaps the most conspicuous practising dramatist of present day Poland, is little more than a talented George V. Hobart.

§ 93

The Art Theatre.—The so-called Art Theatre, wherever it springs up, is generally a bore, and for a simple reason. The impresarios always fall into the error of believing that art is something formidable, austere, and having the imprimatur of what passes for cultured recognition. Art is often nothing of the sort: it is just as often gay as dour, just as often frothy as founded in stone, just as often to be found up the side streets of appreciation as upon the highly lighted highway. The "Choëphori" of Æschylus is not more Art than the "General John Regan" of George Birmingham. And if Tolstoi's "Power of Darkness" is Art, then so, as well, is Schnitzler's "Reigen." There is just as much place in an authentic Art Theatre for Harold Brighouse's "Hobson's Choice" as for Ibsen's "Rosmersholm" or Björnsterne Björnson's "Sigurd Slembe."

§ 94

The Moving Pictures and the Theatre.—Still come facts of the technique of the motion picture

industry's invasion of the legitimate stage. A motion picture impresario has a new mistress. The girl wants to get into the moving pictures, but the impresario can do little for her unless she has some sort of name: the girl flatly declines to play small parts: she wants one of the leading parts or nothing: her man must gratify her whim or lose her. The impresario buys the manuscript of a play—any hack play lying around will do. He produces it for $10,000 with his girl in the leading rôle. He puts it on out of town and then buys a six weeks' lease of a New York theatre from one of the managers by outbidding a legitimate producer beyond the latter's means. If the legitimate producer is able to pay only the regular rental of the theatre, say $4,000, the movie gentleman bids $4,500 and gets the lease. The play, with the girl in it, opens. The movie gentleman has paid out $10,000 on the production, and $27,000 for the six weeks' rental of the theatre, or a total of $37,000. The play, let us say, is not much of a success: it plays, with the help of the cut-rate ticket agents, to a gross of only $6,000 on the week, or a total for the six weeks of $36,000. Ha, ha! you say, the movie gentleman has lost money—$1,000 to be exact, and it serves him right! But you are wrong. He has, for a mere $1,000, made a name for his girl—at least enough of a name to "go" in the movies; he

has identified her with the play; he has made a movie name for the play, for which—had he bought it from another producer—he would have had to pay all the way from $15,000 to $40,000; and he is now able to slip over his sweet one upon the movie patrons as an actress of high talent and Broadway renown. And, meanwhile, unable to get the New York theatre, some such producer as Arthur Hopkins is forced, at the loss of the comparatively little capital he has, temporarily to lay off in Red Bank, New Jersey, a company of respectable actors in a respectable play.

I am again ringing in false alarms, you say? There have already, within the last three months, been four such cases. Five more are in the offing. And the new season, as I write, has reached only the quarter-mile post.

§ 95

Mr. Clayton Hamilton and His Hat.—Three selections from the dramatic criticism of Clayton Hamilton, in *Vogue.*

I

"'Adam and Eva' is both skilfully constructed and wittily written. Good workmanship is rare in these shoddy and neglectful days; and hats should evermore be doffed in honour of good workmen."

II

"It is, of course, impossible to determine whether or not Harry Beresford could give an equally capable performance of a totally different character; but in this particular part ('Boys Will Be Boys,' by Irvin S. Cobb) he reaches greatness; and whenever greatness is achieved, all lovers of the arts should rise to their feet and stand reverently, hats off, with uncovered heads."

III

"The Yiddish theatre is more cultivated and more cultured than the American; and this achievement has been registered by a group of people who have been resident among us for only a quarter of a century. If we choose to regard these people as foreigners, we are condemned to take our hats off to them. But to remove the hat is a salutary exercise; for it reminds us to respect the grand old name of gentleman."

§ 96

A Somewhat Uncritical Prejudice.—I confess to a somewhat uncritical prejudice against the frequent labours to invest with sentimental interest the baroque lech of the past middle-age female. To me, such a theme is obscene in a foxy way without possessing the more direct advantage of aggressive vulgarity. Elbert Hubbard once said that whenever a man and a woman meet, there is dràma—

unless they are too old. What Hubbard probably meant to imply was that, where the protagonists are too old, what results is burlesque. Thus when, in the sort of play of which I speak, two ancient steam-radiators are brought into juxtaposition, what inevitably proceeds is snickerbraü. I have contemplated many a pen approach the theme valiantly, only to return from the tilt unhorsed. It is a thesis that can't well be treated sentimentally. And so I repeat that whatever others may think of a play in which is exposed the vain concupiscence of a wrinkled and warped ex-flapper, I personally cannot stomach it. I have essayed the job at least fifty times, and have habitually failed. "Years of Discretion," which tickled the baldheads, upset me. In Germany, a play with a similarly senile central damsel and called "Mary's Big Heart," the work of Korfiz Holm, did the same. In Austria, a much better play by Sil Vara, called "A Woman of Forty," did the same. Also in Germany, a play of like nature called "An Education in Love," by Hans Kyser, did the same. And in France, a play carrying the theme through a male central figure, the work of de Flers and the late de Caillavet, did the same. You cannot dramatize seriously the Galula of George Ade's "Sultan of Sulu."

§ 97

On the Vicissitudes of a Critic.—Every year or so, some gentleman of the theatre who is confident that Hall Caine is the next greatest living dramatist to Abraham Schomer and that "Oh go to hell" is a greater dramatic speech than Marc Antony's oration, and who hence regards me as a singularly crooked critic, issues—via ambassadors—threats to waylay me presently in a dark alley and bite me. For sixteen years, rarely a season that has failed to reveal me to some such gentleman in the light of a potential cookie. But though I have now and then defensively equipped myself with small capsules of sulphureted hydrogen, surprise boutonnières containing hidden squirt guns, old-fashioned strawberry shortcakes, an automatic and very life-like mouse, cachoo powder, loaded cigars, explosive trick matches and a push button containing a pin (worn on the coat lapel), my armament seems never to have been called upon to exhibit its virtuosity.

On certain other periodic occasions some gentleman of the theatre, given to the custom of spelling diva with an n and irritated by the critical conjecture that the vocal chords are probably displayed to their fullest advantage when the singer [illegible] pright position, complains bitterly to my

office and bothers me so much listening to the ululations of my employer that I am compelled, for comfort's sake, to discharge him, take over his interest in the property and run the thing myself in a peaceful manner.

And on certain other occasions some gentleman of the theatre, who imagines that I have some grudge against him other than the fact that he produces tenth-rate plays and sends me seats to sit through them, accosts me and makes so much noise and so many gestures that I, unable clearly to make out his purpose, think he is trying adequately to tell me how good I am, mistake his extended fist for an invitation to shake hands, warmly shake hands, thank him profusely, and so suffer the extreme embarrassment and discomfort of gaining him for a friend.

I often wonder why these gentlemen who thus attach an absurd and undue importance to me and seek to work my undoing, do not—if they desire effectually to make a fool of me—take a leaf from the unintentional stratagem employed by Mr, David Belasco. I say unintentional because Mr. Belasco undoubtedly duly appreciates—as I myself fully appreciate—that altogether too much attention is paid already to certain dramatic critics by certain producers to whom the dramatic critics in point pay altogether too much attention. And the

notion, therefore, that Mr. Belasco cares one way or the other is ridiculous. But whether he cares or does not care, the fact remains that, slowly but surely, Mr. Belasco is succeeding brilliantly in discrediting me. And the worst of it is that, while year by year I feel myself being thus gradually discredited, I am, as one groping in the dark, helpless to fight against the final relentless, devastating, low estimate of me.

Some dozen or more years ago, when first I began to suggest the infirmities and grotesquely bogus tenets of the Belasco stage and its dramaturgical rites, I was—since Mr. Belasco was then the Anointed of the great yokelry—looked on as one honest, callous to hocus-pocus, and possessed of sapient critical eye. And in the several years succeeding, as I continued in the face of the general prostration to make bold to point out (save in the instance of certain isolated excellent productions) the Belasco deficiencies, my reputation for unhoodwinkable veracity continued to grow apace. But did Mr. Belasco so much as peep? Did he so much as *once* threaten to bite me? Did he approach my employers on tiptoe while I was sojourning mayhap at Palm Beach or Coronado and whisper gamy somethings against me into their ears? Did he accost me in foyers and wave his arms at me [illegible] fashion and denounce me loudly to the

assembled scholars? Or did he once refuse me admittance to his theatres? He did not. On the contrary, he continued to treat me, as always he had treated me, with the highest politeness and courtesy, sending me the very best seats in his playhouse accompanied by gentlemanly notes of welcome, causing his minions to check my coat and hat gratis, and making me in every way thoroughly comfortable—and embarrassed. And thus shrewdly bided his time.

For as year after year passed, and as eighth-rate play after eighth-rate play succeeded one another upon his stage, and as he was growing richer and richer, I found myself, though I was writing of the eighth-rate quality of the plays as honestly as I had in years before, being yet gradually regarded even by my old supporters as one who was undoubtedly prejudiced against the producer of these plays. How, otherwise, could I so regularly damn? How, otherwise, could I so regularly refrain from praise?

Aware of the droll forces thus working against me, I tried all sorts of expedients—letting this bad play down more easily than it deserved, over-emphasizing an actor's good performance in that bad play, and the like—but to little avail. I essayed all sorts of compromises with myself, trying hard to find something worth while in the different ex-

hibits, hoping against hope to bring myself to like something I ordinarily didn't like. But I honestly couldn't. And I saw my reputation for fairness and integrity slowly slipping from me, as beach sand from the fingers. And I thus doubt that today there is one reader in a hundred who is not a trifle suspicious of me, who doesn't in his heart believe that I have something against this Belasco and am in the habit of using him undeservedly as a chopping block.

Mr. Belasco provides the major difficulty of my critical career. I tell you quite frankly that I see no way to counteract his Machiavellian but ever-smiling courtesy to me. He suavely invites me to his eighth-rate plays; I write that they are eighth-rate plays; and such is the tragedy of prolonged repetition, no one any longer believes me. But, so long as Mr. Belasco is willing, I am willing. I shall continue to accept his invitations. And I shall pray to God that he will soon produce a first-rate play if only to save my critical reputation and my job. I am determined to write praise of him some day, or burst. For another season of "Daddies," "Tiger-Tigers," "Pollys with a Past," "Tiger Roses," "Dark Rosaleens," "Son-Daughters" and "Gold Diggers" and—so far as anyone believing in my honesty is concerned—I shall be irretrievably lost.

§ 98

A Broadway Racine.—Introducing Mr. Cosmo Hamilton and two samples of his art. First, "Scandal," a dramatization of his serial story of the same name. Here, a mossback relish of the species favourite of the cheap sex magazines, the essay of which is the laborious titillation of the servant girl's *sruditse* by providing her piece-meal with fables of constantly imminent, but never quite realized, rape. Long since meat for the pant-slat, this sort of thing reached its apogee seven or eight years ago with the publication of such masterpieces as Chambers' "Common Law," Elizabeth Robins' "My Little Sister," and Johnson's "Salamander," a trio that gave the cuisine sororities many a jolly bounce. Belatedly, now, comes this Hamilton toting all the familiar baggage including the peter pancratic heroine and the hero who never-never-lands. His work, following closely the models named above, lacks however even the superficial glitter of Chambers, the superficial character drawing of Johnson or the superficial Robins' sense of "timeliness": it is the literal whim-wham of the old-time Garvice-Libbey-Clay paper-back with the Ritz substituted for Darrelford Manor and the Avenue for South Audley Street. Yet for all its venerable formula, this breed of story—even when

handled with the meagre skill of a Hamilton—rarely fails to round up the democrats. The so-called "sex-wave" never actually passes: the height of the wave merely changes. To argue from the occasional failure of such a play that the public no longer cares for such plays is—as I have several times in the past pointed out—to argue from the occasional failure of a haberdasher that men no longer care to wear socks.

Hamilton's second sample bears the title, "An Exchange of Wives," and follows the same formula as the first. Here the author takes the mildewed theme of Elmer Harris' "Thy Neighbour's Wife" and plays of a kidney fore and aft and fashions a jake-stinger wherein the characters talk like so many Cynics Calenders and smirk their ways crescendo to the adultery that never takes place. The author's penetratingly original philosophy and wit are summed up in the play's key speech: "A man must make love to his wife all the time or some other man will." An Englishman, Hamilton entertains us with the spectacle of Americans addressing each other as "old son" and "old thing." His trite situations and phraseological banalities he laboriously seeks to gloss over and conceal with such hack subterfuges as likening this situation to a similar stereotyped stage situation and as observing of that cuckooed verbal banality that it is "as the

newspapers say,——." A typical Broadway genius!

§ 99

The Theatre Mind.—The person who takes his mind with him into a theatre is kin to the person who takes his mind with him into a ballroom. The theatre is, above everything else, a pleasure temple: the mind has no place in it. A person may find pleasure in beautiful poetry, rich music, lovely colours, robust humour, happy wit, pretty women, ringing drama—in any or all of the finer things that a theatre has to offer; but surely none of these things calls upon the mind. For those things in the theatre which call upon the mind—one had better say posture themselves to call upon the mind—such things, for example, as thesis drama, are not the best things of the theatre, but the mongrel, half-caste, bastard things. They, and the things like them, are for the persons who have no minds to take with them to a theatre, even if they would.

The theatre mind, at its best, is a mind purged of every vestige of soberness and needle-fine discrimination, of studious reflection and sharp balance. It is a mind in a dinner jacket, with its hat at something of a tilt, and with six or seven anti-ethical cocktails chasing one another gaily in and out of its fibres, tissues and lobes. It is on an emotion

and colour spree. It is on the boozy hunt for flashily painted dramatic lamp-posts that will support again its properly limp doubt in the nobility of humanity, the goodness of God, and the faithfulness of its best girl. Syllogisms? To hell with syllogisms! Logic? To hell with logic! Polemics? To hell with polemics! Bring on the soft and soothing poetry! Bring on the horse-pistols! Bring on Falstaff! Bring on the women!

§ 100

The Art of Actor-Stroking, As Practised by the New York Times:—

" . . . A little of the real flame is in Edward Robinson, too. You have only to see his performance as Satin ('Night Refuge') to realize it and to realize, too, how all-compensating is the real fire. Here is a young actor seemingly without an atom of what is feebly called 'personal distinction.' His speech (and Satin was supposed to be a man of education) is what dear Mrs. Sanders used to call 'barbareous.' He takes the keynote speech of the play, where Satin cries out: 'What is truth? Human beings—that's the truth,' and devastates it by saying, 'Youman beans.' Yet . . . he is still worth his weight in gold!"

§ 101

An Audience's Imagination.—It is a stock saw that the greatest actor in the theatre is the audience's

imagination, and that the shrewd cultivation of that imagination is ever productive of rich financial returns. Nothing could be more ridiculous. The more a dramatist and producer rely on the imagination of the audience, the less the box-office reward that is theirs. An audience fills a theatre not so eager to perform with its imagination as to have its imagination performed upon. There is no effort at paradox in this last. The difference is the difference between a rank commercial failure like Molnar's "Where Ignorance Is Bliss" which asks an audience to perform with its imagination and a great commercial success like Barrie's "Peter Pan" which performs upon the audience's imagination by supplying to it every detail of imagination, ready-made and persuasively labelled.

§ 102

A Garland of Girls.—George W. Lederer, when the history of the American theatre comes finally to be written, will figure, first, as the American papa of the so-called revue and, second, as the world papa of the modern so-called girl show. But I have always chosen to regard him above everything else as the papa of a vastly more national institution, an institution as uniquely and intrinsically American as it was close to the soil—to wit, the

cigarette picture. When George Lederer began his career, I was still at that age when drama meant nothing more to me than the fact that one Belva Don Kersley (in tights) was worth two Madame Janauscheks, one Lotta (in a short skirt), and a slightly soiled Mrs. Kendal. And the boyhood impression of Lederer as the man whose talent was theatrically responsible for picking out the most valuable Allen and Ginter subjects somehow persists with me to this late, and perhaps more sober, day.

For George Lederer, whatever his other virtues, whatever his faults, will go down into the chronicles of our theatre as the super-Ziegfeld of the early 90's, the man who gladdened the American eye with a procession of houris lovelier than has ever since been vouchsafed it. I look back, indeed, through the notes of my "Rosemary," the memories of the theatre we youngsters used to know, and it is strange how often upon the ribbons that gather the clusters of remembrance the name of Lederer appears. What a garland of girls the fellow was sponsor for! What girls, still in all the pretty glory of their teens and little twenties! Lederer started them all on their careers of beauty. He dug them out of obscure choruses; his alert eye detected them in out-of-the-way restaurants, in the auditoriums of provincial theatres, in the crowded waiting-room out-

side his office. He found them in strange corners, in strange nooks, here, there, everywhere; and he took them and led them into spotlights that were soon to flash the news of their beauty across America, and across the seas to London.

Those lovely faces float still down to us now older fellows over the bridge of the years. Can you fail to remember them? Lillian Russell, of course, in the days of Lederer's "Princess Nicotine" at the Casino. (I recall vividly the celluloid-covered "souvenirs" with the resplendent Lil in twenty different postures.) The Russell was then—well, let us say younger than she is today; she was on the brink of becoming the American Beauty; and Lederer was shrewdly guiding her pink-and-whiteness to the point where one pack of Sweet Caporals containing her picture (the one in which she was leaning on a pedestal with one elbow) was soon to be worth a dozen Regensburg panatelas. But the heavenly Lil was by no means the only jewel in the Lederer tiara. There was, for example—and surely you remember her—Virginia Earle, she of hair like a flowing gallon of Würzburger. And Madge Lessing, and Jeannette Bageard, and Jane English, and Edna Wallace Hopper (there was a cutie for you, *messieurs!*), and Mabelle Gilman, and Paula Edwardes, and Lotta Faust, and Ella Snyder (you had forgotten her, I'll wager) and

Phyllis Rankin, then setting you to whistle "When We Are Married," and five of the famous "Florodora" sextette girls, and Christine Blessing, and Christie Macdonald, and Polly Chase, and Elsie Ferguson . . . They were all Lederer's children. For it was he who had picked the daisies from the field of weeds and had brought them to that greatest of all display-greeneries: the musical comedy stage.

Think of the galaxy that he turned loose in a single evening in the famous "Wild Rose," probably the most notable collection of pretty women that a single stage has ever disclosed. Irene Bentley, the most beautiful musical show luminary of her day: a dazzling blonde girl, then, with a complexion like a blushing charlotte russe and a mouth like an apricot that had just had its feelings hurt. Little Marie George with the pert brown curls (what movie material there was to those movieless days!) and the saucy beauty spot upon the right cheek. Evelyn Nesbit, then a youngster just from Pittsburgh. Edna Hunter, with that peculiar expression of always looking homesick, ever attractive to men. Marguerite Clark, Elsie Ferguson, Elba Kenny, the celebrated Viola Carlstedt, Neva Aymer (who in later years played with the Rogers Brothers), Mazie Follette, the Belva Don Kersley to whom reference has already been made, Teddie Du Coe (whose name was always being misspelled), Hazel Man-

chester, Nina Randall, Irene Bishop . . . there were others, but memory cannot retain completely so rich a treasury.

Della Fox and her curl were protégées of our hero. Vashti Earle, perhaps the prettiest girl the American stage has ever known, was another: Vashti with hair like lazy ginger-ale and that wonderful frightened look as if she were in constant receipt of the news that some evil Italiano was chasing her mother with a butcher-knife. Mona Sydney, the English girl, with mien more regal, if possible, than that of a Brooklyn dowager at the opera, Sylvia Thorne, Adele Ritchie and Lou Middleton who was actually presented by her admirers with a gold, bejewelled medal proclaiming her "the champion pretty chorus girl of the world"—these were still others guided by our hero to world fame. And then, of course, there was Edna May.

A panorama *de luxe*, gentlemen! And so it was but natural that when cigarette pictures passed into that distant bourne of my life where hover, too, the ghosts of G. A. Henty, Palmer Cox's Brownies, "Harper's Young People," plush opera glasses and penny taffy balls containing (if one was a lucky picker) an agate—and so it was but natural, as I grew older and more sedate and began to ponder the inscrutable problems of life, that I should seek out this uncommon virtuoso of women and seek to learn

how in the name of all the gods of all the mountains he had contrived his astonishing—aye, dumfounding—and priceless talent.

Finding the belle-belasco and bidding him let me in on the secret—I would, methought, bribe the fellow, if reluctant, with a choice ten-cent cigarro—I settled myself in expectation. Here, ruminated I, would be esoteric news, maybe something akin to divine revelation. Getting the choice ten-cent cigarro ready—it was treasured in the inside pocket of my surtout—I poised, somewhat breathless, my question.

"Tell me," I bade, "how did you do it?"

"Do what?" inquired our hero with a high politeness. (I quickly slid the choice ten-cent cigarro back into my pocket.)

"Contrive so exactly and infallibly—and without a miss—to pick out, from all the candidates in big America, so unparalleled an assortment of magnificent ones?" I continued, not unmindful of the irresistible Epsom quality of my blandishment.

There was a moment's pause. Our hero blew his nose.

"Easy," he returned. "I looked at their eyes."

I was, I confess it, disappointed. I had given myself to anticipate a much more intricate—shall I say o[illegible]el.

"Their eyes?" And the dubiety must have been clear upon my countenance.

"Their eyes," repeated Lederer. "If a girl's eyes are sad, nine men in ten will think her pretty. Or if her eyes are laughing, nine men in ten will think her pretty. It is the girl with nondescript eyes—eyes that do not look sad *or* happy—just eyes—that doesn't attract men's attention. Edna May was a triumph of drooping eyes. What else could account for her enormous success? She wasn't pretty as prettiness goes in the theatre; she had no talent. But those eyes of hers—sad, droopy, innocent-looking eyes—those eyes made her with men America and England over. Including *me*."

"You?"

"Me," he continued. "I took her on eyes alone. When I was searching around for someone to play the lead in 'The Belle of New York'—I had a devil of a time trying to find exactly the right-looking kind of girl—there was a pair of eyes that stuck in my mind. I recalled—though not the owner's name—that they belonged to a little girl, dressed in a white shirtwaist and blue sailor hat, that Sylvia Thorne (whose relative, Fred Titus, the girl was married to) had brought to see me a year before. 'Where are those sad eyes?' I asked Sylvia. She

knew at once whom I meant. 'They're on the waiting list of your chorus,' she answered. 'I want them for the 'Belle'; get them,' I said to her. She did. The rest you know. Those eyes made a great music show success and a new toast of the town. And they had been buried, unheeded, for two whole years in Hoyt's 'A Contented Woman' and in the back row of the chorus of Oscar Hammerstein's 'Santa Maria.' "

"Might it not have been something else besides eyes?" I ventured.

"No. What else could it have been? Edna May had the faintest talent imaginable. She had to learn everything—every note, every gesture, every step, every intonation—parrot-like. When she rehearsed the song 'Follow Me,' even the music manuscript had to be interlined with such things as 'Here you put out your right foot,' 'Here you gaze wistfully at the audience,' 'Here you drop your eyes to the floor,' etc. And then on the opening night of 'The Belle,' I had to make up as a member of the 'wop' chorus, stand in back of her, and prompt her to boot! She didn't even know the value of her own innocent look. When she went to London with 'The Belle,' I found her one night putting on a wig—a wig over that straight, convent-girl-looking hair of hers! I tore it off her head. If she had worn it *one* night, her whole carefully built up rep-

utation for being pretty would have gone glimmering. That wig might forever have ruined her. It would have killed the expression in her eyes, taken away the *sine qua non* innocent look. I have never allowed a girl to wear a wig under any circumstances. Not even when she was playing boy parts. A wig would make a Helen of Troy look like a cabbage. Edna was a sheephead. When I asked her why in Heaven's name she had taken so great a chance with her fragile reputation as a beauty, she told me that a wig would spare her the trouble of combing her hair every night!"

According to George Lederer, a novice always seems much prettier to an audience—whatever the relative beauty of the two—than her more or less practised sister. "The new face," he puts it, "is always the pretty face."

"So far, so good," I now observed, "but—eyes or no eyes—how did you go about finding the lovely ones in the first place?"

"Well"—and his gaze rested upon the photograph of an especially toothsome sweetmeat high upon the left wall of his sanctum—"that girl's case may be an illustration."

The girl of the photograph was one of the celebrated beauties of her day.

"One evening, I had an engagement to dine with Sadie Martinot in her apartments. I went up and

rang the bell. That girl"—indicating the angel on the wall—"opened the door."

"Who was she?" I asked, foul ignoramus that I am. "Miss Martinot's niece?"

"She was Sadie Martinot's maid."

There were other illustrations. One girl, due to achieve high cigarette picture fame, he had found behind a notions counter in a yokel department store; and another, recalled as being worth one Pauline Hall and two Selma Hermans with a couple of licorice nigger babies thrown in, he had discovered—her eyes had "got" him—passing flapjacks, coffee and sassy remarks in the quick lunch room of a jerkwater railroad station. And there were still other illustrations of a different sort. One night, while one of his musical comedies was playing in Baltimore, Lederer—standing in the lobby of the theatre—observed a remarkably beautiful young girl pass into the auditorium with her escort. She was so precisely the beauty type for which he was constantly seeking that he set out at once to find out who she was. He hurried past the ticket-taker and, in the back aisle of the theatre, encountered the house manager. Indicating the superb one, he asked the latter if he had ever seen her before and, if so, what her name was. That worthy replied that he had never seen her and hadn't the faintest idea who she might be. An

usher, a boy of about sixteen or seventeen, standing close by overheard the conversation.

"I know who that corker is, Mr. Lederer," he said.

"*You* do?" returned Lederer, not without some surprise. "Well, who is she?"

"She's my sister," replied the lad.

The usher was Wilmer Bentley who, after Lederer had made his sister Irene famous, became an actor in one of her companies.

Who was the prettiest girl of all those days of surpassingly pretty girlhood? What is Lederer's own vote?

I asked him.

"There were many, many pretty ones, but"—and he looked cautiously in the direction of the door as if to make sure no one was listening—"but I'll tell you a secret. I never, in all my experience of those days, ever saw one absolutely and entirely pretty girl!"

Egad, sir, and here was intriguing news! What, Vashti Earle not a pea-chick of the first carat! Elsie Ferguson not a persicum of the highest blush! Christine Blessing not a plum of the true vintage! It was unthinkable. I contrived to gasp out a why.

"There was something about every one of the girls that kept them from being entirely pretty," confided our connoisseur. "Take Elsie Ferguson,

for example. She had a very pretty face but her pretty face was spoiled by her utter lack of expression. Her expression was always as listless as the lake in Central Park. I never knew a girl with so dead a look."

I was horrified. Here was a sour sacrilege.

"But the Mlle. Vashti!" I interjected.

"An eye-massaging damsel, I grant you," replied our connoisseur. "Truly, an eye-massaging damsel," he repeated. "But—to my mind—one thing kept her, too, from being completely lovely. She had a funny walk. If she stood still, she was what we may describe as a humdinger. But the moment she got in motion—presto!—the illusion was gone. That's why I always kept her standing still on the stage. I never let her walk more than three paces in any single act. And it was that, my friend, that fooled you."

"Mona Sydney," he went on, "was too tall. Marie George's hair was just a shade 'off' aptly to harmonize with her delicate complexion. Edna May, as I have already said, was too stupid to be completely pretty, though her eyes tricked everybody into imagining that she was pretty. Irene Bentley was not tall enough: her type of beauty demanded for perfection at least two extra inches. Mabelle Gilman lacked repose: she always gave one the impression that she was working too hard. I'll

tell you a story after a while to illustrate how she thus spoiled the English audiences' belief in her good-looks. Virginia Earle was a trifle too plump. And so with all the rest of them. There was in each case one thing wrong with each of them."

I smiled a smile of superior and complacent wisdom. I had something, thought I, up my sleeve.

"Why are you smiling?" our connoisseur bade of me.

"What"—and I slowly turned my coup round and round in my mouth, as if presently to use it in dismaying manner through a bean-shooter—"what," I repeated, "about *Lillian Russell* in those days?"

I sat back and waited. Surely, I had fetched our Lederer at last. *There* was one he had overlooked in his too comprehensive sweep.

But alas for Bottom and his conceit. It was our Lederer's turn to display the smile of superior and complacent wisdom.

"Lillian was a beauty—in the main," he qualified. "But she had ugly arms. No one knew this better than she; she was a clever woman. That's the reason she always wore long sleeves."

According to George Lederer the "run" of a woman's beauty is for ten years at most. "The season of prettiness," he expresses it, "lasts only ten years." Eighteen to twenty-eight are the best

pretty-years. "I have seen them dandelions at eighteen," he says, "and thistles at twenty-eight and one month."

"But what of so-called personality?" I asked.

"But we were speaking of physical beauty," he reminded me.

"But what of so-called personality?" I persisted. And I again felt into my pocket for my possibly necessary bribe, the choice ten-cent cigarro.

"That's another matter. Russell had it and it lifted her over when her youth and youthful prettiness left her. So, too, did Elsie Ferguson—though in no such marked degree; her very devastating 'coldness' was in itself a contribution to her individuality: the two were indistinguishable: one was the other. Lotta Faust and Edna Wallace had it and lovely Irene Bentley didn't. There were many who lacked it—and they were promptly forgotten once the oncoming years robbed them of their early prettiness. Jeannette Bageard was thus quickly forgotten once youth departed from her. So were Jane English, and Nina Randall, and Irene Bishop, and many of the others I have named. But the personality, as we call it, of Madge Lessing has kept her theatrically alive even at this late day. So, also, has the so-called personality of Christie Macdonald. So, too, through her life, did the vivid personality of little Della Fox."

"What is this so-called personality, then?" I asked, bromidically.

"Personality"—and Lederer fixed my choice ten-cent cigarro with a covetous eye—"personality is the triumph of nothing over something."

"That," I remarked, "sounds very much like the kind of nonsense *I* write."

"True enough," he retorted; "yet, strangely enough, it is a fact. Personality may be merely two sad eyes inserted into what is otherwise a large, vapid pumpkin pie. It may be a smile. It may be exaggerated animal liveliness—like Eva Tanguay's 'personality,' for instance. Or, paradoxically, personality may be a complete absence of personality—as in the case of Pauline Chase. But the best of all personalities, I believe, the most durable and the most successful, is the 'sad' personality. The girl who looks 'sad' to nine men out of ten has a stock in trade that is theatrically worth a hundred thousand dollars. The 'tear' is the all-important element in personality, the one important element that contributes to its stage marketability, just as—everything else considered—it is the surest sure-fire quality in music."

"Who, in your estimate, is the prettiest girl on the present-day American stage?" I asked at length.

Lederer reached for my choice ten-cent cigarro.

I hesitated a moment. It was a fine cigarro and

I did not relish parting with it. But, I considered, after all, why not? Life is short; I might be run over by a moving picturẽ actor's mauve automobile on the way out; I might never have a chance to suck my delicious cigarro myself. After all, then, why not? And, after a farewell loving gaze, I handed it over with what carefree, lavish air I could command.

"Now then," I reiterated, "who, in your estimate, is the loveliest *poulet* on the present-day American stage?"

Lederer lighted my choice cigarro, took a long puff, tasted his tongue, took another puff—this time a shorter one—and tasted his tongue again.

He said he wouldn't tell me.

The fellow, whatever his virtuosity in women, is no judge of fine tobacco.

§ 103

The Genesis of the Modern Girl Show.—That one good-looking girl is enough to make almost any music show agreeable is a fact known and admitted by every man save he be bribed with a salary of several thousand dollars a year professorially to deny it before the drama classes at Columbia University. Let the score be soever tinny and the libretto soever full of mouldy wheezes on William

Jennings Bryan, the Anti-Saloon League and other Grape Nuts, yet let there catch the eye a single dainty and pinchable houri—and the evening travels auspiciously. There is, alas, small critical dignity in such news, but the truths of the theatre too often wear motley. After spending $38,000 in 1915 on a music show called "The Peasant Girl," with an expensive, augmented orchestra to play the tuneful Viennese score, with such high salaried and accomplished vocalists as Emma Trentini and John Charles Thomas to sing it, and such a high-salaried comedian as Clifton Crawford to crack the jokes, the Messrs. Shubert, Comstock and Gest were somewhat dumfounded to discover, when the show opened, that the entire success of the $38,000 enterprise depended upon retaining in the cast a $50 a week cutie named Frances Pritchard. When, in the November of 1919, Florenz Ziegfeld found that the business of the "Midnight Frolic" was rapidly dwindling, did he rush out and cable Maggie Teyte an offer of $1,500 a week to lift up the musical end of the show or G. P. Huntley an offer of $1,000 to lift up the comic end? He, philosopher in the ways of audiences, did nothing of the kind. He cabled a pretty little chorus flapper named Kathleen Martyn an offer of a hundred-odd dollars a week, got her—and trade promptly took a brace.

The difficulty confronting the music show producers is not quite as represented by the scholarly gentlemen who annually compose 12mo. books on the subject. Good scores and good librettos—or at least passable scores and passable librettos—are not so hard to get as we are led to believe. Victor Herbert is the peer of the Viennese Kalmann and Lehar; Jerome Kern is often the equal of the British Ivan Caryll and Leslie Stuart; and our American ragtime confectioners lead the world. If we have no native librettists like the Parisian Rip, our producers can readily buy up such foreign librettos and, as in the recent instance of "As You Were," adapt them to their uses. Our scenic artists are imaginative, and so are our costumers. If this were all, the American music show producers would all be millionaires. But it isn't all. The trouble lies in finding—the girls. And, having once found them, in presenting them to the best advantage. A. H. Woods lost $92,000 on the engaging "Gypsy Love" because he couldn't bag a single pretty chiclet for its chorus. The delightful "Purple Road," intrinsically as good a music show as America had seen in half a dozen years, proved a failure for Joseph M. Gaites for the same reason. The "Century Midnight Whirl," despite a lavish outlay, was a dismal failure until its impresario stopped looking for elaborately fancy "acts" and began compet-

ing with the rival Ziegfeld "Midnight Frolic" in the only intelligent way—by going down to Forty-second Street and winning away from the latter one of its most appetizing ornaments.

As I have said, however, discovering and getting the plum is only half the business—indeed, the lesser half. Once having discovered and landed her, it is necessary theatrically to authenticate her. A girl who is pretty on the street, unless she is craftily and adroitly handled, may look like a character woman on the stage. Take a Marion Davies in all her blonde al fresco loveliness and put her on the stage in a cerise frock and maroon hat and she will look like Czipra in "The Gipsy Baron." A homely girl becomes automatically prettier upon the illuminated platform. A pretty girl, automatically homelier. To the art of preserving and heightening a pretty girl's prettiness upon the stage, Ziegfeld—in this day—has addressed himself more successfully than any of his many competitors. But long before the Ziegfeld talents became known to the contemporary theatre, George Lederer was displaying what was in his day an equal virtuosity; for this Lederer, as I have said, was the pretty-girl-maker of twenty and thirty years ago, the parent of the pretty-girl show as we know it today, the man who planted the seed that has, at this later hour, been brought to so colourful and refulgent a bloom.

I have already described in the preceding chapter many of the pretty girls whom Lederer dredged up and exploited in those bygone, beauty-brilliant days. But there remains to be described something a deal more important: *how* he exploited them. The Shuberts had pretty Marilynn Miller at their Winter Garden for three years, but no one suspected that she was pretty until Ziegfeld took her and visited his magic upon her. The comeliest girls in the world are those in the ballet of the Hofoperntheater of Vienna; but no one would know it. The lovely Fairbanks twins passed unnoticed when they were under Winthrop Ames' management; Lillian Lorraine has passed unnoticed when she has not been under Ziegfeld's. And so it was, in the birthday of the modern poultry show, with the eminent George. His girls, many of them, began their careers with other managers and producers, but their radiance remained a secret until they were duly lederered.

"Pourquoi?" I bade of him, prefacing my impressive linguistic talent with the sweet word or two essential to the hornswoggling of the fellow's modesty.

"Tights," he replied. "Up to the time I produced 'The Lady Slavey' at the Casino in '94, all the music show producers put their girls in tights. Tights act on a girl the way a collar without a

necktie acts on a man. Just as the man, even if he is a Francis X. Adonis, looks like a thug, so does the girl in tights, however dainty and pretty she may be, look hard and unappealing. A girl's limbs are pretty largely in the degree that they are not seen. Or, when they are seen, in the degree that they are only momentarily seen. Pavlowa might have the most beautiful legs in the world, but they seem much less beautiful than those of any bow-legged gal with a skirt on. So I took girls who were intrinsically pretty but whose appeal had been spoiled by other producers through putting them in tights, made them wear fluffy skirts, and so passed them off afresh as modest and lovely creatures. Modesty is half of prettiness in an audience's eyes. You never see what seems to you to be a pretty girl in a burlesque show. Many of the betighted girls in 'The Black Crook' were perhaps quite as pretty as the famous skirted lot in 'The Wild Rose,' but—now think a moment—no one remembers the name of a *single one* of them."

Methought I detected here a loop-hole. Nonchalantly twirling a moustachio by way of concealing my impatience to spring my heavy fetch, I drawled, "But what, my friend, if the beauty's legs are truly elegant specimens; would you conceal them *then?*"

My friend gazed at me with the wistful compas-

sion of a gentleman about to poke his wife in the jaw.

"Name the beauty," he commanded.

"But," I protested, with difficulty suppressing my mortification at the fellow's suspicions that I—that *I* should be privy to the esoteric news of the actual grandeur of this or that beauty's pilasters, "but," I protested, "how should I know whether—"

"Name any famous beauty off-hand and, for argument's sake, take a chance," he interrupted.

"Well then, Maxine Elliott—when she was a young woman," I ventured.

My friend let out a roar. The very cuspidor shook. "You've hit on an excellent example," he choked. "Nine men in ten would think as you do. And here's the truth. Maxine Elliott has very likely pendulums, *very* likely. And that she has gained a great reputation as a beauty, no one denies. But it happens to be a fact that, in her early days on the stage, she did wear tights. And it also happens to be a fact that not a word was ever heard about her being a beauty until she stopped wearing them!"

Our orator negotiated a long breath. I propped a cushion behind me, and prepared myself.

"Let's get back to our original subject," he began. "You asked me *how* I brought out the pretti-

ness of pretty girls after I had found the girls. I have told you one way. Here's another. Up to the time of 'The Passing Show' in 1894—incidentally, the materfamilias of such present-day girl-vaudeville revues as 'The Follies'—music show producers used to go in invariably for coloured stockings—red, blue, green, pink, white, and mixed. Kin Hubbard has said, 'There are two kinds of women: those born with big feet, and those who can wear white shoes.' It's the same on the stage with stockings. There are two kinds of girls: those with fat legs, and those who can wear white stockings. Or stockings of any colour. Now, when I confide to you that among all the celebrated beauties who were under my management there were not more than five at the most who had pretty, thin legs—when not more than a dozen out of any hundred girls on the stage today are found to have pretty, thin legs—you may imagine what would have happened to the beauty-reputations of my glamorous coterie had I put them in white or coloured hosiery. Their legs would have looked out of all proportion to the rest of them. And that is precisely how they did look in such instances as they had worn coloured stockings under other producers. So I introduced the one and only sure-fire leg-beautifier that the stage knows, to wit, the black silk

stocking. The result you know. For the first time in their stage lives, the girls' legs looked lovely.

"Take, for instance, the case of Ella Snyder. When she appeared in the choruses of 'The Whirl of the Town' and 'The Belle of New York,' certain costumes compelled her to wear coloured silk stockings. Even I, for all my general prejudice against coloured silk stockings, could not get around using them once in a while: there are, obviously, chorus costumes that sometimes demand them. Well, in these coloured stockings, Ella's legs never attracted so much as a single word of eulogy. But, presto! the moment I put black silk stockings on her in 'The Casino Girl,' her legs began to be admired and to be referred to by the audiences and play reviewers. And by the time I elevated her to the soubrette rôle in the London production of 'The American Beauty,' her legs were—and were about to become—as much of a national theatrical institution as Frankie Bailey's legs, Della Fox's curl or Cissie Fitzgerald's wink.

"We seem to be confining ourselves very much to—er—legs," I reminded him, affecting—not without transparent effort—an air of top-lofty professional disinterestedness in the subject.

"All right, my dear Watson," observed our Burton Holmes, "let us pass on to the question of hair.

The fashion in the theatre in the 1890's and early 1900's was to let the girls frizz and fuzzle their hair out of all recognition. The moment a girl got into her dressing-room, she began monkeying with her hair and transforming it into something exactly the opposite of what it looked like on the street or at home. A girl's hair is prettiest when she lets it alone—the way it looks, that is, when she hasn't got it all set for a party. I therefore got the girls to wear their hair on the stage just as they wore it when they weren't on the stage. And, on my stage, they accordingly looked twice as 'nice,' twice as pretty, and twice as canoodly, as they looked on other stages. No man likes a girl coiffed to within an inch of her life. There's something about studiously mussed girl's hair that appeals to a man.

"Let me give you an illustration. I had a damsel in 'The Casino Girl' named Clara Selten (one of the famous 'City Girls'—'Miss Wabash of Chicago') who, on the day she went to have her photographs taken, had done her hair up in the elaborate fashion popular at the time. During the month following the opening of the show, my press agent informed me that, while he had no difficulty at all in placing the pictures of the other girls with the newspapers, he somehow seemed unable to land a single picture of this girl. And, he said, she was

much put out over not getting her pictures printed along with those of the other 'City Girls' like Emmie Lennox, Eleanor Burns, Geraldine Fair, Louise Lloyd and Ruby Reid. I sympathized with her. She was very pretty and I couldn't understand why the newspaper-men had not been willing to print her picture. I asked the press agent to let me see her photographs. I compared them with the other girls' photographs and saw at a glance where the trouble lay. It lay in the very careful, artificial manner in which she had done up her hair. It made her look unappealing. The newspaper-men, although they didn't stop to figure it out—being men—didn't like the picture or the girl of the picture. I called Miss Selten, told her to muss up her hair, and to have her picture taken again. She did. During the next year, the records (preserved in my scrap-books) show that the newspaper-men—being men—printed her picture exactly one hundred and eighty times."

"Then," he continued, "there's the important question—everything else being right about the girl—of setting her off properly. Take a very pretty girl and place her on the stage among twenty or thirty other moderately pretty girls, and she'll not stand out any more than a large diamond in a show-case full of medium-size diamonds. Like the diamond, the very pretty girl needs a setting. I cast

about trying to hit on the manner of setting off my very pretty girls to their fullest advantage, and finally—after a lot of unsuccessful experimenting—discovered it. If I got hold of an exceptionally pretty girl, I would get the audience to think she was twice as pretty as she actually was by placing on either side of her in the chorus a downright homely girl. The scheme worked liked a charm. The pretty girl stood out brilliantly and—since she thus fastened the eyes of the audience upon herself—no one noticed the contrasting homely girls after the first glance, and so they didn't matter.

"By way of illustrating this point, take the case of Lotta Faust. Lotta was a pretty girl, but she was, so to speak, not a true lallapaloosa. Yet I persuaded the public to regard her as a true lallapaloosa from the day of 'The Casino Girl' (Monday, March 19, 1900) to the day of her death. And in the manner I have just described. To the right of her, in the show alluded to, I placed a comparatively plain girl named Blanche Cramer, and to the left of her another comparatively plain one named Vina Snyder . . . and Lotta was thus made to seem doubly beautiful. And, by the way, who remembers Blanche Cramer or Vina Snyder? Not a soul! They didn't matter. Two plain girls were sacrificed to make one beauty-reputation."

"Then, too," he went on, "I would gradually pull

out of the chorus and 'plant' certain pretty girls through a show. This—in 'The Lady Slavey'—was the birth of the modern show-girl, as she is now called. In that show, twenty-six years ago, I introduced for the first time the promenade of haughty beauties across the stage. I had landed four unusually pretty girls and didn't want to load up the chorus with too many homely contrasts to them—you can take a chance with two homely contrast-girls, or even with four, but beyond that it's dangerous: the audience may notice them. So I decided to use the four, so to speak, in a chorus of their own. This 'chorus' became the show-girl scheme of the present day. The growth of this present-day show-girl scheme was an accident. At the outset, it had been my firm idea to keep the number, in every show I put on, at four. But when I produced 'The Telephone Girl' a few years later, I had found—in addition to my original quartette—two other girls who were too pretty to lose, so I raised the number to six. And then, when a few years later still I put on 'The Belle of New York,' I found another pair that I couldn't get out of my eye, and I raised the six to eight. And at eight the number stands, with small change, to this day."

I asked by what name the modern show-girl was known in those early days.

"They first got a name at the time of 'The Tele-

phone Girl," related our friend. "They were always alluded to then as 'The Big Six' which, incidentally, was the name of fire-engines celebrated at that period."

"But, by Allah's beard!" I protested, "Why name pretty girls after ugly fire-engines?"

"But, by Allah's cowlick!" he returned, "Why name ugly Pullman cars after pretty girls?"

The stage hocus-pocus of making plain women pretty and pretty women prettier has, of course, been developed to a high point since Lederer began his felicitous experimenting, but it was Lederer who started the ball rolling. Until he appeared on the scene, a girl was merely shoved out onto the stage, bathed in the searching glare of a hard white spotlight, and thus made to fight for every inch of her good-looks. Lederer appreciated that there isn't one girl in fifty, however pretty she may be, who doesn't come out of such a battle a loser. So he proceeded to the paying business of capitalizing beauty as painstakingly as his rival producers were proceeding to the vastly less lucrative business of capitalizing jokes on Coxey's Army, Maude S., Lord Dunraven and Nellie Bly. The common practise today of softening the lines in an actress' face by the use of amber footlights; of lifting the lighting of the stage a couple of pegs when the star makes her appearance, that the in-

creased illumination may be held by the audience to be due to the permeating effulgence of the lady's personality; of setting off a pretty girl's "daintiness' by dressing her in the pastel shades and the girls that flank her in the hard primary colours; of having her photographs touched up "impressionistically" so as to hide her perhaps too scant hair and too ample ears; of building down the chair in which she has to sit so that, if she is long-waisted and short-legged, her feet may reach to the floor and her limbs be made to seem long and graceful—many of these wiles date back to Lederer's time. It was he who first got such artists as Archie Gunn to work up idealized posters of the girl-shows he was producing: posters—who forgets "The Dangerous Maid" one? —that made the beholder pawn his very rubber-shoes in order to get inside the tent to lay an eye on the unbelievable beauty on display therein. It was he who craftily introduced the spreading of press-agents' stories of this girl's convent upbringing, that her stage innocence might be made thoroughly beguiling, and of that girl's imminent engagement to the great-grandson of the second Baron Waterspark, that her glamour might gain a new [illegible]

([illegible] such means, he built up the tradit[illegible] that survives to this day, and

that will unquestionably survive through the chronicles of the American stage. By way of sample of the Lederer craft, I quote from a leading article in the New York *Journal* of April 4, 1900. Letters an inch high, spreading across three columns richly pictured, read: "Casino Girls Say Au Revoir on the Eve of Sailing for London." Below the gallery of portraits of Geraldine Fair, Irene Bentley, Ethel Elverton, et al., the two following paragraphs lead the lengthy rhapsody:

"Look out, Albion! She is coming—the American Beauty—about seventy-eight different varieties of herself. The Duke's son and the son of a cycle of Earls had better sit up and take notice. She sails this morning on the American Liner St. Paul. If you get down before 10 A. M. you will see her. You can know her by her beautiful, far-away expression that looks like heaven through the small end of a telescope. She will also be wearing a bunch of violets; likely a bunch as big as a young market basket. Take one and eat it pensively. It's the thing—the fashion. She does it herself. It's her manner.

"Anyway, she is the most beautiful thing that breathes. George Lederer picked her out, one by one, from all the most beautiful women in America. There are no more beautiful girls on earth than these."

Imagine a New York newspaper leading with a story like that today! But the legend—a legend embellished with the silks and satins of truth—lives

on, and George Lederer's girls persist in memory as the greatest beauties that the American stage has known.

It was the sagacious Giorgio's rule never to let the public for a moment forget the prettiness of his girls. "A pretty girl," he says, "always seems prettier to a man if he thinks she is in danger—if she seems helpless." So he spread rumours in the May of twenty years ago that fair Virginia Earle was receiving poisoned candy from a jilted suitor and made out her briefly incapacitating cold to be "a serious case of aconite poisoning." Every paper in the eastern part of America printed the story and when, a few days later, Miss Earle's sniffles got well and she could again appear on the stage safe from a moist, red nose, she was sympathetically viewed as more beautiful than ever before. From London Lederer had cabled stories of young Lords committing suicide because Edna May, Ella Snyder, Helen Lord and Ruby Reid had cruelly declined their names, their hands and their fortunes. Scarcely a day was permitted to go by that Goldie Mohr was not announced as the model selected by some French painter for his famous "The Glory of Love," that Héléne Girard (accents and all) was not engaged to the handsome son of a rich United States Senator, and that Emmie Lennox, the chubby Winnie Echard, Louise Forester, Veronica Stafford,

Eleanor Burns, Vincie Tohey (whose sister was married to Thomas Edison, Jr.), little Daisy Lucas, Jessie Jordan and Lotta Faust had not turned down offers of thousands of dollars to let their pictures adorn the advertisements of bicycles, hams, Hire's Root Beer and "See That Hump" hooks and eyes.

But the fellow had good basic material to work with. "If a girl is half-way good-looking," he says, "all you have to do to make the public believe she is a howling beauty is to assure it often enough that she is. Lillian Russell was, to a considerable extent—despite her ample share of good-looks—really made by this kind of propaganda. So was Maxine Elliott. Lillian's beauty thus gradually became something taken for granted—like the unassailable strength of Gibraltar—no one ever questioned it or put it to the test, and it has thus endured even to now. You'll still find countless people who, though they have never seen her, believe that Lillian Russell is still as beautiful today as she was thirty years ago when the propaganda was in full working harness. Such is the persistence of habit."

Until Lederer came upon the scene, a music show chorus was something like the Metropolitan Opera House chorus of the present time: a collection of sticks given periodically to a wooden gesture in the direction of R. U. E. and to a coincident "Ah, here

come the soldiers!" Our friend changed all this. He individualized the girls, gave them life (it was he who coined the word "ginger", for theatrical use), and made them seem more like active, healthy, eager girls than like the clay figures in red and green gipsy bodices and pink tights of the years before. To audiences that had been accustomed to viewing the young women of the chorus as a mere unimportant, lethargic background, Lederer's chorus girls were suddenly revealed as a very lively, attractive and important foreground. Thus, the chorus girl emerged and quickly began to be noticed for herself—and the male public was amazed to find that she was often as pretty as the principal: something it had never before even remotely suspected.

The Ziegfeld method of today is a development of this old Casino method. The music show dodge of today, with its chorus girls all-important, stems from the Lederer stratagem of the 1890's—from the days of the "Casino Annual Reviews" with—I quote the advertisements—their "Unprecedented Chorus—Wholly Feminine." Those were the days of "The Whirl of the Town," with its "Bicycle Beauty Chorus," its "Happy Broadway Chappies," its "Yum-Yum and Geisha Girls" ("As the Geisha girlie goes, On her tippie-tippie toes, Every other girl is commonplace and humdrum; And you think

you'd like to stay, For a lifetime and a day, In the company of dainty little Yum-Yum"), its "Silver Clog Dance Girls" and—lest we forget—its "Fitzsimmons, the Lobster." Those were the days of "In Gay New York," "The Passing Show," "The Merry World," and "Yankee Doodle Dandy" with its "College Chappies," its "Incubator Battalion," its "Gay Studio Belles." Small wonder that such stellar beauties as Paula Edwardes, Catherine Linyard, Theresa Vaughn, Camille D'Arville and Gladys Wallis had to give the chorus battle in the Peach Sweepstakes; that such illustrious comiques as Thomas Q. Seabrooke, Jimmie Powers, Walter Jones, Richard Carle, Jeff De Angelis, the eminent Dan Daly and Dave Warfield had to struggle doubly hard to get the bald-head pew to listen to their repartees; and that such warblers as Harry Davenport and George K. Fortescue had to strain their vocal chords to draw even the momentary attention of the ushers.

At this juncture, it began to dawn upon me that my interview with our friend Lederer was consisting largely in permitting myself to be interrupted. Did I detect a lugubrious criticism in his features, or was that look merely the rememoration of my luscious ten-cent cigarro which erst he had cozened out of me and which his bourgeois tongue had failed to appreciate. Ah well, thought I, let bygones be

bygones; I am no elephant; I harbour no lingering grudge; I would let the fellow have his way; I would ask him a question and let him, too, have his day in court. And how his features lit up when he glimpsed my intent. It pleases me, I confess it freely, to give one such happiness. I recall, indeed, that once—in a similar situation—but that, perhaps, is another story. . . .

To return to our Lederer, his beaming visage, now that his opportunity was to be magnanimously vouchsafed him, was akin to that of a small boy licking a raspberry all-day sucker. I was won completely by it. I determined to let him talk on, on, on—and nary an interruption, nary a word would I interpose. Recalling that the subject closest to his heart was his introduction, in "The Man in the Moon" at the old Olympia Theatre, of the world's first pony ballet (he had himself coined the word "pony" in its relation to the small flapper, a word that has since given birth to "broiler," "squab," "chicken," etc.)—recalling, as I say, that this was the subject perhaps closest to his pride, I determined to ask him blissfully and contentfully to expatiate thereon.

I asked him.

He began.

§ 104

Back of the Scenes of Press-Agency.—Nine months ago, on a day burdened with world-shaking news, every important newspaper in the city of New York made room upon its front page for the story of a Turk, registered at an hotel in Central Park West, who, according to the account, had rushed to America from Constantinople to find a young girl who had mysteriously disappeared from the Sultan's harem. Clemenceau, Lloyd George, the condition of President Wilson, the Red terror, the uprisings in Germany, the débâcle in the Senate—all were peremptorily shunted to one side to make room for this. For, as the editors appreciated, it was the type of story that appeals to Americans much more richly than the more sober news of the day all compact. Three days after the newspapers printed the story, the editors learned that they had been bamboozled by a theatrical press-agent. The story was a "plant" for a moving picture bearing the classic name, "The Virgin of Stamboul."

Twenty years before this almost to a day, every important newspaper in the city of New York made room upon its front page for the story of three beautiful girls, and one in particular, whose lives were hanging in the balance from having eaten poisoned chocolates sent to them by some mysterious un-

known. Eugene V. Debs, the new outline of policy by President McKinley, the South African troubles, serious race riots in Georgia, the renewed agitation for a merchant marine—all were peremptorily shunted to one side to make room for this. For, as the editors appreciated, it was the type of story that appeals to Americans much more richly than the more sober news of the day all compact. Three days after the newspapers printed the story, the editors learned that they had been bamboozled by a theatrical press-agent. The story was a "plant" for a musical show bearing the classic name, "The Casino Girl."

The business of theatrical press-agency is an eternal struggle between the reluctance and skepticism of the newspaper editor and the inventiveness and ingenuity of the press-agent; and it is to the credit of the latter that the records of the last two decades have uniformly returned him victor by a large margin. The Anna Held milk-baths, the temporary changing of Mabel Taliaferro's name to merely Nell, the heralding of Polaire as the ugliest woman in the world, the police lines at the advance box-office sale for Maude Adams, the tan bark spread in West Forty-second Street so that no traffic nois[illegible]ht disturb Mrs. Patrick Campbell, the faintin[illegible]omen at the presentation of Clyde

Fitch's "The City," the announcement of Ethel Barrymore's numerous engagements to titled Englishmen, the Gaby Deslys King of Portugal hoax—these are but a few of his innumerable triumphs. For, to paraphrase P. T. Barnum—there's a newspaper editor born every minute.

Theatrical press-agency as we have come to know it in more recent years may be said first to have shown signs of blossoming to purple flower in the heyday of our friend Lederer. There were, true enough, press-agents of a high flavour before that era, but the modern six-cylinder press-agent first came to life when this Lederer came to life. For it was this Lederer who devised the strategy that press-agents follow to this day; it was he who worked out the ground-plan of the great hocus-pocus that the theatrical publicity man of the present time places his faith upon. It matters not that the old circus methods have today, at least for the time being, passed out of theatrical press-agency, that the press-agency now often takes on a suaver and stricter air. At bottom, the generalship that oozed the story of the poisoned candy into the gazettes twenty years ago and the generalship that oozed the story of the Turk into the same gazettes only a few months ago, are twins.

It occurred to me that a peep behind the scenes

of press-agency in the days of its birth might not be lacking in salt. I accordingly bade the Lederer deliver.

"Press-agency," he began, glancing at his watch and observing that as it was already ten p. m. and as he had to catch a train to Philadelphia at nine the next morning he would have only eleven hours to explain himself; "Press-agency," he continued, "was responsible for at least three-quarters of my theatrical successes."

I permitted a realistic look of indignant disbelief to traverse my features.

"You are too modest, good sir!" I gasped.

"Modest your grandmother!" returned my friend. "I am boasting. The producer who is not properly proud of the results of his press-agency is a liar. A man owes his election to the Presidency to press-agency; a great war is won as much by press-agency as by bullets; why should a theatrical manager affect not to admit and admire its power to make him? If the Mittenthal Brothers could get hold of George Creel, they'd have the Drama League boosting them before the Drama League knew it."

"But you don't mean to say that a good press-agent can work with no material behind him?"

"Certainly not, jackass,"—our friend, by way of propitiation, here handed me a princely looking

cheroot—"one can't make bricks without straw."

"Or," I concordantly ventured, having lighted it and sampled a whiff, "cigars."

"But give a lively press-agent some decent material to work with," our friend went on, heedless of my hot one, "give him a map of the battle-field with the position of the enemy clearly indicated, and the results are noble ones. For example, 'The Belle of New York' was intrinsically a very good show, but shrewd press-agency made the publics of America and English believe that it was twice as good, and twice as well worth seeing, as it actually was. Belasco is a whip-hand at this sort of thing in these days. When he announces that Puccini is to make an opera out of 'The Son-Daughter,' the public promptly reads a doubled value into the play and rushes to see it. I used to do much the same thing in a different manner. I'd announce that the plot of 'The Belle of New York' had exercised such an appeal over this or that celebrated French or Italian dramatist that he was even then contracting for the rights to the libretto in order to make a straight play out of it. What if the story was doubted, even snickered at? A snicker is just as good publicity as a frown. Every time you make a man laugh—whether the laugh is on you or not—you add a prospective ticket-buyer to your box-office line."

"Yes, sir," I said. "Go on."

"Again," our Lederer pursued, "you will recall that I have already told you that much of the beauty-reputation of many of my famous Casino girls was created by crafty press-agency. However, I was not concrete when I told you. Here are some of the inside stories of how the thing worked. Take the first example, that of Geraldine Fair. Here was a moderately pretty girl, but by no manner of means a rip-snorter. A girl is often as pretty as her ankles are slender. The Fair girl's ankles were not slender. In order, therefore, to palm her off as a true beauty it was initially necessary to do something about her ankles. I went about it this way. I decided that the best way to get the public to forget her ankles was, paradoxically, to call attention to them. That is, convince the public that they were beautiful ankles. I therefore got the girl a pair of black silk stockings with very fine perpendicular white lines and got her to have photographs taken of her ankles in them. She did; the fine perpendicular white lines made her ankles look beautifully slender; the photographs were landed with the newspapers—they were a novelty in their day; and the propaganda thus set in motion was responsible for the gradual acceptance of Geraldine Fair as a perfect Venus. It was no great difficulty getting the newspapers to print the photographs: newspaper editors are as human as you or I: and a lovely ankle

is a lovely ankle. Even the New York *World*, a tough nut for press-agents to crack in those days, printed a large picture of the ankles—you'll find it in the issue of April 29, 1900, its eloquence still undimmed by the yellowing years."

"Yes, sir," I said. "Go on."

"Take Example No. 2," our shepherd proceeded. "Take the case of Mabelle Gilman. I realized when I got hold of her that I had a good theatrical property in her. I wanted to develop her and make a public favourite out of her. She had ability, and she had a fair share of looks. Since she was a hard and sincere worker, I knew the ability would take care of itself—I knew that she'd do her share in that direction—but since she had only a fair measure of looks, I knew that it was up to *me* to get busy in *that* direction and do what I could to cast about her the reputation of being a bewildering, heaven-kissed beauty. Now, it is an old secret of the theatre that an actress should never have her photograph taken with a hat or a husband. Fashions and times change all too quickly. But it is also dangerous for an actress with a future to have any sort of photograph taken at all. Nothing can be more embarrassing to an actress than a photograph taken of her ten years before. Such a photograph provides a testimony that is damaging and not to be shaken. I therefore determined not to run

too many chances with Mabelle Gilman and her beauty reputation. So I got her to stop having photographs taken and employed Sewell Collins, the artist, to paint a small idealized poster of her. This poster, with a large, nondescript hat to hide any future, dead-give-away changes in the style of coiffure and with a fanciful frock to hide the sartorial date of the picture, I spread broadcast and kept in use for years. It was Mabelle Gilman's own private Fountain of Youth: as long as it was in the public prints she could never grow old. Somehow, I confess, it fooled even me. I still always think of Mabelle Gilman as she looked in that pretty poster. My other girls, alas, I too often think of in terms of their photographs of twenty and thirty years ago: now grotesquely literal reminders."

"Tempora mutantur, et nos mutamur in illis," I sighed.

"I don't understand German," said our friend, "but anyway I'll tell you another story. To begin with, the public, all said to the contrary notwithstanding, believes everything that it reads, provided only that it reads it often enough. It has read for the last twenty years that it is always foggy in London, that whenever a man goes to a sale of unclaimed express packages, buys one and takes it home and opens it, he finds that it contains either an

old pink chemise or a set of burglar tools, that Maeterlinck is a mystic and a recluse, that the French steamship lines serve excellent wine gratis, that . . ."

"Yes, sir," I said. "Go on."

"That you," continued our Lederer, a baleful glitter in his eye, "are a great dramatic critic— and it believes it."

"You convince me, Oswald," I interjected. "But what are you driving at?"

"At this. Let any press-agent yarn be printed once, and the public may be a bit skeptical of it. But let it be printed twice, and the public will accept it as the gospel truth. Here's an illustration. As long ago as twenty-five years, the story about the actress' lost diamonds had already sprouted whiskers. But, crack all the jokes they may about it, it is still good publicity stuff if it is rightly handled. When Madge Lessing was under my management in the old Casino days, I used to work the lost-diamonds story for her to excellent advantage. Indeed, it worked so well that, in her day, she soon came to be regarded by the public as the possessor and wearer of the finest collection of jewels on the American stage. Here is the manner in which the thing was set going. First, I got my press-agent to land a story with the newspapers to the effect that Madge had lost a $20,000 diamond bracelet, and

that $5,000 was offered as a reward for its return, with no questions asked. The press-agent contrived to get the story printed in four out of five papers (he had taken the precaution to insert, the day before, a small advertisement in the several 'lost and found' departments: this gave colour to the story). Thus was the seed planted. The very next day after the story of the loss of the $20,000 diamond bracelet was printed, I had Madge notify the police that a $15,000 pearl necklace had been stolen from her apartment. So quickly did this second story follow on the heels of the first that any skepticism the newspapers might have had as to its authenticity, had it stood alone, was dispelled. Certainly, they thought, no press-agent would be such an idiot as to try to put over *two* lost-jewelry stories in *two* days. The second story, which the reporters got from the police, not from the press-agent, was therefore duly put into type. So far, so good. Now came the real test. On Friday of the same week—the second story had appeared in the Tuesday papers—Miss Lessing (through an adroit press-agent) was again caused to report to the police that her apartment had once more been entered and three valuable ruby and diamond bar-pins stolen. Surely, everyone believed, there could be no hornswoggling here. Not even the most brazen and impudent of press-agents could be so raw.

So, again, the story was printed; all air of a press-agent 'plant' was summarily sent packing; and thus began the legend that Madge Lessing had a superlatively beautiful and valuable collection of gems. The public read once, and doubted. It read twice, and believed. It read three times, and was convinced for all time. That's the way it goes."

"Well, well, well," I ejaculated.

Thus convinced that I was enormously impressed and hanging breathless to his amazing disclosures, our Lederer continued.

"Take Vashti Earle . . ."

"But," I protested, "my wife and seven children!"

"As a comique"—and our friend bestowed upon me an icy glare—"you are, my friend, a lemon. Consider Vashti Earle. . . ."

"Oh, very well," I agreed. "It is Spring and—"

"Shut up!" yelled our Lederer, glancing at his watch, noting that it was already midnight, and observing that he had only nine hours left until train time. "Consider the case of Vashti Earle, pretty, pretty Vashti Earle. What do you recall as the loveliest, most alluring feature about the lovely Vashti?"

"The look that I described in a preceding chapter," I replied, handing our friend a luscious stogie

(which I had bought me for mine own delectation at an outlay of some five sous) by way of regaining his favour. "The look she had of always seeming just to have been insulted."

"Right!" exclaimed our Lederer. "That was the thing about her—that look as if she had always just had her feelings hurt—that made her so attractive. But it is one thing for a girl on the stage to have an attractive look of that sort, and it is another thing to capitalize the look and get men to talk about it. Men are peculiar. You've got to tell them what they already know or they won't know it. Men in a theatre audience, I mean. It was up to me to make Vashti Earle's appealing look town-talk. This is the way I did it. And, if I hadn't done it, you yourself would undoubtedly never have remembered that look—or even have noticed it in the first place."

I was properly indignant. "It is, sir, conceivable that I might have failed to notice the great virtues of Ibsen when first I sat before him," I protested. "It is even conceivable that I might, the first time I set eyes upon her, have failed to detect the great genius of Sarah Bernhardt. But, sir, it is not conceivable that—"

"Shut up!" said our Lederer. Some people have no gratitude whatsoever. And the fellow was even now puffing at my handsome gift to him.

"Don't interrupt me. I was saying that Vashti Earle's look had to be capitalized to make it a paying theatrical property and I am about to tell you how I drew it to the public's attention. The first time I clapped eyes on the girl when she came to my office looking for a job I realized that that sad look of hers would make her."

"Genius," muttered Foxy Quiller *sotto voce*, with a soupçon of trenchant sarcasm.

"So," continued our oblivious friend, "I decided to 'point' that sad look as a skilful modiste 'points' the best attributes of a woman's figure. I took the girl into the show I was then rehearsing and placed her, first, in a line of girls who—like most chorus girls—had set grins; and, secondly, in the background, with two constantly smiling girls, during the comedian's scenes. The contrast impressed itself upon the audiences at once. Vashti's wonderful sad look stood out like a delicate pearl in a string of loud rhinestones. It began to be talked about. The critics fell for it. The automatic press-agency worked like a charm. And no press-agent in the world is so valuable as such automatic press-agency, believe me. The sad look of Vashti Earle, thus manœuvered and thus capitalized, was worth all the Tody Hamiltons who ever lived."

"Well, well, well," I breathed.

"Then," went on our professor, "take the other

side of it. Take a girl like Elaine Selover, whom I had with me in 'The Belle of New York.' She was a so-so pretty girl, but not an especially pretty one. She hadn't any one thing about her that stood out—there was no one thing about her that could be capitalized as in the case of the Earle girl. It was therefore necessary for me to try another publicity tack with her. I had to make the public look on her as a beauty, but how to go about it? That was the problem. This Selover girl had talent and was, I felt, good theatrical property. But mere talent without beauty wouldn't go far, I realized, in the beautiful-girl shows I was then putting on and having such success with. Yet I wanted the Selover talent in my troupe, so, as I have said, it was my job to foster in the public's mind the notion of the Selover beauty. I pondered the problem for some time, and finally hit upon the plan. I ordered the girl not to have a single photograph of herself taken, and not to give out a single one that she may have had taken in the past, until I gave her permission. This done, I instructed the press-agent of the company to 'lay off' the other girls temporarily and devote his talents entirely to spreading the news that Elaine Selover was a great beauty. Presently, by shrewdly manœuvered press-agency, the agent contrived to get numerous interviews with the girl printed in the newspapers (always without photo-

graphs), interviews in which beauty was regularly the topic of conversation. In addition to this, the agent got the girl to endorse any number of cosmetics, face powders and beauty preparations, which endorsements were presently advertised throughout the country, but also always without photographs of Miss Selover. By such monkey business, duly multiplied, the impression was soon spread broadcast that the girl was a beauty; and audiences believed it before they ever laid eyes on her. When, finally, they did see her, the preliminary insistence upon her beauty got in its fine Italian hand. They saw a beauty in her that wasn't really there. Once in this way get so far with the public that you persuade it to ask itself whether a girl is or isn't a beauty and —whatever or however it replies to its own question —the *notion* of beauty is already imbedded and established in its mind. Thus, to take an immediately recognizable case, although four out of every five Americans agreed with themselves that Duse was not a beauty, the legend of the beauty of Duse persists to this day."

"Yes, sir," I said. "Go on."

"Press-agency has always seemed to me to be one of the most interesting phases of the theatrical business," proceeded our pastor. "It calls, perhaps, for a higher invention and ingenuity than any other branch of the business. It often literally takes a

failure and turns it into an enormous success—as witness the case of the play called 'Experience' a few years ago. 'A lie well told,' said Benedict Arnold, the first really talented press-agent, 'is as good as the truth.' To my way of looking at it, press-agency is as legitimate a profession as the theatre itself. If it often exaggerates, so does the theatre itself often exaggerate. If it colours the truth, so does the theatre colour the truth. A musical comedy is a public's light diversion, so why shouldn't the press-agent of that musical comedy also lightly divert the public—and with the same libretto methods? 'I amuse' is the motto of the girl-show. 'I amuse' is also the motto of the girl-show's press-agent. Ninety-nine persons out of a hundred would rather read an interesting fake story than a dull true story. I myself am one of the ninety-nine. And you are another."

"Thank you," said I. "If ever you get tired of the theatre and want to go into the clairvoyant business, I know where I can get you, very cheaply, an almost new black velvet robe with silver stars and moons on it, to say nothing of a—"

"My dear fellow," interrupted our Lederer. "Are you interviewing *me,* or am I interviewing *you?* Shut up, and listen. One of the best-known of the musical shows I produced at the Casino was 'The Princess Chic.' You remember it. That was

back in 1900. Who wrote the book? Do you remember? You do not. Who wrote the music? Do you remember? You do not. Who played the principal singing and comedy rôles? Do you remember? You do not. What was the plot of the show? Do you remember? You do not. Do you remember a single tune or joke in the show? You do not. Well, what *do* you remember about it?"

I reflected.

"I remember," I answered presently, "that there was a good-looking girl in it named Mathilde Preville, and that there was another named Louise Hepner—I well recall the many pictures of them that used to appear regularly in the newspapers."

"I thought so—and you prove my point for me. It was Mathilde Preville and Louise Hepner that I centred the press-agent campaign for 'The Princess Chic' on. And you remember them to this day! If I had centred the press-agency on Julian Edwards, who wrote the music, or on Kirke La Shelle, who wrote the libretto, or on Richard Golden, the comedian, or on J. C. Miron, who was the leading singer, you'd have remembered them. But I didn't. It's the story all over again of the heavily press-agented six pretty girls who made 'Florodora.' Say 'Florodora' and the connotation is not Leslie Stuart or Owen Hall or Edna Wallace Hopper or Willie Edouin, but the sextette. Say 'The Black

Crook' and the connotation is the press-agented chorus in tights. Say 'The Merry Widow' and the connotation is not Franz Lehar, or Ethel Jackson or Donald Brian, but the press-agented waltz. It's always that way."

Our Lederer paused. He glanced again at his watch.

"It is three o'clock," he said. "I still have six hours 'til train time. Shall I go on?"

"No," I replied. "I fear that I look as if you ought to get a little sleep."

§ 105

The Stories That Aren't Printed.—What was the real cause of William C. Whitney's death? What were the actual death-bed words of Walt Whitman? What was the true reason for the estrangement of a recent President of the United States and his children? Why did the New York *Herald*, under James Gordon Bennett, never fail to feature a certain physician's notoriously spurious observations on spiritualistic phenomena? What made Nat Goodwin succumb to Maxine Elliott and strive to make an actress of her?

If, a[illegible] Daniels' old song, "the biggest fish i[illegible] [illegible]sh that gets away," so is the most i[illegible] often the story that never gets

printed. Truth is stranger than fiction for the simple reason that it is much less frequently seen in public. The newspaper that would print the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth would be on the market within a week. The actress who would tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth about herself would retain approximately as much glamour as an apple-woman. And the theatrical manager who would tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth about anything—but here we get into the irrelevant field of mythology.

I do not essay to hold up this fellow Lederer as any neo-George Washington, but I confess that if he deviates from the truth his deviations have thus far eluded the sharp nose of my private bloodhound. Of all the theatrical producers I have met—and I suppose I have met nine-tenths of them—he impresses me as the frankest and the most honest. He may exaggerate a bit now and again; he may so warm up to a subject that he becomes a trifle overheated; but he will tell a story, provided only it be a good one, whether it swings back and boomerangs him a sardonic whack upon his own eye or whether, pursuing a more even course, it travels on its way to hit the head of some one else. I have yet to encounter a fellow who loved an interesting story more for its own sake. To it, he stands beautifully ready to

sacrifice his name, his fame, and his immortal humidor. And what a library of hitherto untold tales of the theatre he has: a veritable thesaurus of the stage of the 1890's and earlier 1900's, a history of persons and events written entirely between the lines of that portion of the personal history that has already seen the light of print. They are not important stories, as things go in the world, but a goldfish is as diverting in its fashion as a whale: and most people have a way of being fonder of goldfish than of whales. For it is ever the habit of the great neighbourhood of human beings to be more deeply interested in whether Thaïs Schwartz is going to marry Siegfried Mooney or St. Clair Kraus than in the destiny of Russia. And so, too, is it ever the habit of the great masses of persons who seek the theatre to be more deeply interested in something like Mrs. Pat Campbell's dog than in the plans for the formation of a great National Theatre.

"Why?" I asked Lederer.

"You have already answered that—it's human nature," he replied.

"But 'human nature' is too darn vague; let's have something more concrete," I bade.

"Well, then," he said, "for the simple reason that you, for example, or I, for example, or anybody [illegible] example, are always very much more con- [illegible] little things than with big ones. Say

you can't find your toothbrush in the morning. You are twice as miserable for the rest of the morning as if you had mislaid a gold scarf-pin. Say, at two o'clock some afternoon, you find that you've lost $5,000 in the stock market, and say, at two-thirty, you find that you've lost $5 out of your pocket. Which bothers you the more; which irritates you the more and sticks longer in your mind? It's the same with stories. Something trivial that concerns someone you know or someone whom you have seen is a lot more interesting to you than something important that concerns Trotzky, D'Annunzio, Josephus Daniels or Amy Lowell."

"All right," I observed, "go on and try out your theory. You can experiment right here with me."

I ignited the nose of a six-inch Partagas Extremoso Delicioso Grandioso, and composed myself for the test.

"Good enough," said our Lederer, igniting in turn an eight-inch Corona Invincibilia Supremo Magnifico, taking a deep breath, tilting back his swivel-seat and adjusting his right foot upon the inkwell. "I'll begin with one about Maxine Elliott. Along about 1895—just after she had finished an engagement wearing tights in a piece called 'The Voyage of Suzette' at the American Theatre, in New York—the show was produced by T. Henry French —I engaged her to appear in one of my summer

revues. Just before rehearsals were about to start, George B. McLellan, who had contracted to manage the Australian tour of Nat Goodwin, came to me and told me he had to get hold of a very good-looking leading lady for Nat instanter. I told him about Maxine and said that if he wanted her badly enough, he could have her. 'She's got the looks,' I assured him, 'but I don't know whether she can act worth a cent.' 'It's the looks that count with Goodwin,' he replied. 'I'll take a chance on the rest.' And he engaged her. The next day he received a wire from Nat to this effect, 'Would not have Elliott at any price. She is too tall and would ruin my love scenes.' It now devolved upon me to help McLellan out of the muddle by asking Maxine to cancel the contract. This, with a smile, she did. I remember that smile. I wondered at the time what was back of it. I was to learn later, to my amusement.

"Above everything, Maxine Elliott wanted to get on on the dramatic stage. And, in her heart, she wanted that Goodwin contract. So, characteristically, she set out to cure Nat of his nonsense. And her plan was a suave one. She took a train at once to San Francisco, her home, where Tim Frawley, whom she knew, had a stock company. She got a position with this stock company two days after she arrived. A week or so later—as she had figured

out—Nat arrived in San Francisco on his way to Australia. By shrewd work, Maxine prevailed upon a certain friend of hers who knew Nat to persuade the latter off-hand to see one of the stock company's performances—and from a carefully arranged-for seat in the second row. Nat fell, saw, and was conquered. But how? There's the point. There's where Maxine's wit turned the trick. She knew that Nat couldn't fail to withstand her beauty—she had plenty of confidence in her looks, did Maxine, and rightly so—but she knew that her main job was to suggest subtly to him that she wasn't too tall to play love scenes with him. So, clever girl, she not only got the stage director to let her play most of her scenes either sitting down, or leaning upon the piano, or bending over the back of a davenport—all of which adroitly concealed her height—but, to boot, cut down her usual two and one-half inch French heels to about half an inch.

"Nat was completely won over. So much so, indeed, that although he had engaged Blanche Walsh as his leading lady, he nevertheless signed with Maxine for the same position and directed her to follow him on the next steamer. This program was carried out and when Maxine arrived in Melbourne, Blanche Walsh refused to divide the honours with any other leading woman and went back home—just as the always wily Nat figured out."

Our Lederer looked over at me. A beamy grin was upon his visage. He nodded his head benignantly.

"Well, old profundo, how about it?" he asked triumphantly.

"I suppose you're right," I answered. "I suppose that ninety-nine boobs out of a hundred would undoubtedly be much more interested in that story than in the inside story, say, of the preparation of Dakin's solution from liquid chlorine by the gravimetric method, but you have yet to convince *me*."

The gaze that our Lederer now deposited upon me was one of much pity.

"Good enough," he observed, reigniting his now five-inch Invincibilia Supremo Magnifico, taking another deep breath, tilting back his swivel-stool anew, and adjusting his left foot alongside his right upon the ink-well. "I'll try you again, this time with one about Edna May. During the run of 'The Belle of New York' in London, Edna was invited to a reception that was to be attended by the Prince of Wales, afterward King Edward VII. Edna's real name was Pettie; she was born in Syracuse, N. Y.; and her papa was a letter-carrier. This had been mentioned to the Prince by someone and he, misun-
[illegible], observed to Edna when she was pre-
[illegible], 'I understand that your father is a
[illegible].' To which Edna, in her habitually

naïve way, replied 'Y-e-s.' Mind you, she didn't understand either what the Prince meant—she was a dear girl, but couldn't tell black from white—and it was her policy in public always to be on the safe side and to keep from making bad breaks by never answering anything more than 'yes' or 'no.'"

Our friend beamed complacently upon me once again. "How about that one, old doloroso?" he asked. "Does that, perchance, interest you more than the inside story of Imré Csztsz's and Hâjo Dóczi-Lukosz's fiscal plan for the rehabilitation of Püspök-Ladány, Kis-Ujszállás and Jász-Apâti?"

"Try again," I advised him. "It does not."

"Good enough," he came back. "Then how about this one about Lillian Russell? At the time I engaged the American Beauty for my production of 'The Princess Nicotine,' she had been married, and divorced, twice—first to and from Harry Braham and, secondly, to and from Teddy Solomon. 'Never again,' she told me. So, when the show was under weigh, I decided to capitalize her decision as publicity material. I called my press-agent and told him to work up the idea for all it was worth. He did and, on the very day that the newspapers played up the story big, Lillian sent word to me that she wanted to see me. I went back to her dressing-room and found her wreathed in

smiles. I imagined that I knew the reason for those smiles. 'It proved great publicity stuff, didn't it?' I asked her, returning smile for smile. 'Great!' she replied. 'But I'll have something better for you to use tomorrow. I married Giovanni Perugini, the tenor in this company, at noon today.' "

Our friend looked at me with the expression of a parade passing through a triumphal arch.

"Just a moment," he said. "Wait till I've finished." And did I detect something akin to a confident chuckle?

"Well," he went on, "it was a fact. Furthermore, she invited me to join a small supper party she was giving that night in her apartments in celebration of the event. I went and, when I arrived, found three or four other guests, together with the two newlyweds. We had a jolly little supper and then, somewhat to my astonishment—since it was hardly the gesture of a bride on her wedding night—the fair Lillian suggested that we all sit down to a game of cards. It was now about half-past one o'clock. We got out the cards and chips and presently were in the midst of a friendly little game of poker. Perugini, along toward two-thirty, got sleepy and retired. But, though I made several suggest[illegible] that we stop the game, the beautiful Lilli[illegible] [illegible]antly insisted that we continue. She love[illegible] [illegible]nd they were her favourite pastime.

We kept on playing—playing—playing. I began to think that our hostess' habitual politeness prevented her from getting rid of us, so I suggested to her, as politely as I in turn could, that she boot us out bodily. Whereupon she looked at me very sweetly and said, 'Not at all! I wouldn't think of it. I *always* play cards on my wedding nights!'

"Well?" beamed the Lederer.

"I fear," retorted I, "that while that story is conceivably more entertaining than the inside story of Dr. Orndorff's esoteric investigation of tetraiodophenolphthalein and tetraiodophenoltetrachlorophthalein and some of their derivatives, it still may be said to leave something to be desired."

"You don't say so!" said our friend, reigniting his now three-inch Invincibilia Supremo Magnifico, taking another abysmal breath, tilting his *fauteuil* still farther back, and raising his brogans from the ink-well up to the plaster bust of John Greenleaf Whittier. "You don't say so!" he repeated. "Good enough. Then how does this one strike you, old penseroso?

"You will remember that, after the great success of Edna May in 'The Belle of New York' in London, I took Mabelle Gilman over in 'The Casino Girl' in the hope of repeating the former's success with the latter. It seemed to me to be the easiest of cinches to accomplish this, since the Gilman girl

was much prettier than the May girl, much more intelligent, and theatrically much more competent. But you will also remember that—in spite of this, and to my astonishment—Mabelle Gilman proved in London to be the worst kind of frost. The real reason for this has never been told. Here's the story.

"On Gilman's opening night, Edna May entered the theatre with a party of friends while the first act was in progress and while Gilman was on the stage. (This was after Edna May had scored her big success in 'The Belle'.) The moment the audience caught sight of her, it jumped to its feet and cheered and applauded her, forgetting Mabelle Gilman's presence on the stage completely. Gilman, however, went calmly on with her work and, before the evening was over, had so entirely won the attention and admiration of the audience that it, in turn, forgot Edna completely, cheered and applauded Mabelle and, at the finish, insisted upon her making a speech.

"Obviously, I was elated. I felt dead certain that Gilman had not only equalled May's success, but had exceeded it. Imagine my consternation, then, when the business began falling off more and more on each successive night. I couldn't under-
s[illegible] [illegible]f Gilman had proved such a knock-out
[illegible]g night, why didn't the crowd come

back to see her again and again, as in the case of the May girl? But not only did the first-night crowd not come back—scarcely anyone came at all. On the fifth night—still puzzling over the matter—I happened after the play to meet Marie Tempest in one of the Strand restaurants. Marie Tempest was, and still is, a very shrewd woman, and I thought I would get her reason for the *débâcle.* I broached the subject to her. This was her answer and, as I was to discover from subsequent proofs, the correct solution of the mystery. 'At one point in the second act on the opening night,' she said, 'Mabelle Gilman wiped a bit of perspiration from her forehead. That little thing spelled ruin for her in London. A London audience may admire an actress who works hard, but it will never come back to see her, it will never talk to its neighbour about her, if she shows any signs of working hard!'

"It was the truth," added Lederer. "London threw itself at Edna May's feet because she had all that listlessness that London adores. But it would have nothing to do with Mabelle Gilman, a much more competent actress, because she made its audiences feel that she was working hard."

Our friend paused for breath.

"Well," said he, gazing at his now two-inch Invincibilia Supremo Magnifico, "how about that one, Prof. Dr. Crabapple?"

"You are getting warmer," I condescended. "Pray continue."

"Good enough," he smiled, unbottoning the three lower buttons of his waistcoat; "here goes with another.

"I'll not, for reasons that are more or less plain, tell you the name of the young woman who figures in this story. She was—I'll tell you this much, and you can have your fill of guessing her identity —one of the most delicately beautiful of the famous 'Florodora' girls. She, like a number of the other girls who were to become famous in the celebrated Sextette, had been in my Casino shows and I had given her to Tommy Ryley who, with Dunne and Fisher, was producing the piece. (I may remark, in passing, that it was stipulated in the contract for the appearance of 'Florodora' at the Casino that I was to organize, select and approve Ryley's company, which I did.) This illustrious beauty of whom I speak was noted for her fresh, clean look and her thoroughly well-maided air. The many newspaper stories about her rarely failed to allude to her as one 'who looked as if she had always just stepped out of a tub', as one 'who was as neat and dainty as a daisy', as one 'whose teeth were like so many snowy pearls', and so on. Well, here is the other side of the picture.

"On the first-night of 'Florodora' at the Casino—

November 11, 1900, by the way—this celebrated beauty rushed in, completely out of breath, about twenty minutes before the curtain was due to go up. 'I have been dining with Mr. ——, a friend of mine,' she palpitated, 'and I lost all track of the time.' With that, she dashed up to the dressing room which she occupied with two of the other girls and, before changing into her stage costume, grabbed a tooth-brush lying at hand and began vigorously to brush her teeth. 'Just a minute!' exclaimed one of her room-mates, 'but that's *my* tooth-brush you're using!' The beauty stopped. 'Gee, I'm so sorry,' was her rejoinder; 'I thought it had been left here by some girl in the show that closed last week.' "

Our Lederer looked over at me.

"Eh?" And he lifted his right eyebrow.

"You are getting warmer by the minute," I granted. "Pray be good enough to continue."

Our Lederer surveyed his now one-inch Invincibilia Supremo Magnifico, gave a lusty drag at it, expelled a noble cloud of smoke, patted his lungs a resounding wallop, and observed, "Good enough. How"—and here he fixed me with a do or die gaze —"how about this one?

"We are always hearing musical comedy actresses lament that if only they could get hold of the right kind of catchy song number, they would be

made. But it has been my experience with them that they never know the song when they do get their hands on it. Only the other day I read an interview in the New York *Tribune* with Marie Cahill in which she told how she had discovered the song that made her—'Nancy Brown' it was called; you remember it well—and how overjoyed she was when she found it. 'That song,' she said, 'put me on the road to stardom. How lucky it was that I detected its value at once.' Or words to that effect. Here is the true story. I had engaged Marie Cahill for my production of 'The Wild Rose' and was casting around for the right kind of song for her. The choice finally narrowed down to two. One was 'Nancy Brown'; the other was a so-called ballad song of the 'Green Fields of Virginia' species. Since it was as plain as day even to a blind man that 'Nancy Brown' was the song for Cahill, I gave her the copy of it and asked her what she thought of it. 'I don't like it at all,' was her answer. 'In the first place, it hasn't any individuality: it's too tame to get over. What's that other one you have in your hand?'

"I showed her the other song, and she jumped at it. She insisted that it, not 'Nancy Brown,' would make her. I knew that she was talking nonsense and told her so, but I couldn't convince her. After a long and futile conversation, I said all right, let

her keep the script of the other song, and told her to go ahead and study it. Then I proceeded to convince her against her will that she ought to sing 'Nancy.' I would whistle it in her presence. I got two members of 'The Wild Rose' company to learn the tune and casually whistle it around the stage during lulls in the rehearsals. I slyly got her maid to learn the melody and hum it. This kept up for about a week. Finally, the reluctant Marie asked me what the tune was that 'everyone (as she put it) seemed to have on their brain.' I told her it was the song she didn't want to sing. 'Well,' she said, 'I suppose I might try it—but I have my doubts about it still.' The rest you know. Marie Cahill sang the song and became famous."

Our friend sucked the half-inch butt of his quondam regal Invincibilia Supremo Magnifico. An unmistakable touch of the glee of the conqueror was in his tone as he gazed upon me again and framed his words:

"And now do you agree that the trivial untold story is often more interesting to the average person than the more important history, say, of the financing of the Chicago and Northwestern Railway Company's Winona and St. Peter Extension or the findings in the matter of endocardial lesions developing during pneumococcus in horses?"

I looked at what remained of my own once ele-

gant six-inch Partagas Extremoso Delicioso Grandioso.

I hesitated a moment.

"It is possible—it is quite possible," I vouchsafed. "But let us leave it to the reader."

§ 106

The Broadway of Yesterday.—Something, I had noticed for some time, was disturbing our Lederer: a peculiar look when I asked him questions, an even more peculiar look when I made opinions on his exploits, a look more peculiar still when the tense of my remarks was pitched in the past. Upon this look I sought enlightenment.

"Well," said our Lederer, "if you must know, it's this: you treat me like a Rip Van Winkle, like some ancestral dodo, and I don't like it. I'm not the back number you seem to think I am. I am still theatrically as young as a two-year old."

I inserted my monocle. I performed an elaborate scrutiny of the Lederer. I gave me a judicial pause. "Doubtless," I observed presently, "it is that cravat you wear: maroon, sky blue and cerise compose a trying combination: yes, doubtless it is the cravat. It was that which deceived me. There—place your hand over it. Ah, excellent! I was certain. Without the cravat you look as if you

were just on the point of entering Yale. Remarkable!"

Was ever a man so compactly appeased? A beatific grin, defeating his herculean effort to drown it, spread across our Lederer's visage. He summoned the hovering garçon to fetch instanter an half dozen—nay, a dozen—kingly weeds. I perceived that the moment had come to get the fellow once again to unbelt himself.

"What do you want—what'll I talk about?" he promptly rejoined. "Anything you say—go as far as you like."

I proposed that not I, but the Lederer, go as far as *he* liked: that he vouchsafe a number of salty *chroniques* of the Broadway of bygone days: that, in a word, he tell us tales *on* the theatre folk of that era rather than the customary tales *about* them.

"I'll go you!" he cried, his hand still covering the maroon, sky blue and cerise cravat. "Here's one on Sydney Rosenfeld, the playwright. Sydney was very hard up one day and asked Augustin Daly to let him adapt a play for him so that he might get the initial advance royalty of $500 which he badly needed. Daly gave him a German comedy and told him to go ahead. He adapted the manuscript, renamed it 'The Social Wheel,' turned it over to Daly and got his five hundred. But as month after month passed and Daly didn't produce the play,

Sydney—still broke—became worried. He approached Daly. 'The play's no good, I have decided,' Daly told him. 'Take it back, keep the five hundred, and God bless you.' Sydney was flabbergasted. 'No good!' he shouted. 'No good! What's the matter with it?' 'It isn't funny,' replied Daly. 'It isn't funny!" screamed Sydney. 'Why, it made *me* laugh.' 'All right,' observed Daly, 'see how far that will get you!'

"Sydney looked Daly hard in the eye. 'I'll show you how far that'll get me,' he retorted, and stamped out of the office. I met him that evening. I saw at once that he was up to something. I asked him what. 'I'm going to prove to Daly that he doesn't know what he's talking about,' he told me. 'I'm going to laugh that play into $5,000 pocket money if I have to bust a rib doing it.'

"Sydney read the play, first, to William H. Crane and laughed so hard while reading it—he is an excellent and convincing actor at this sort of thing—that the deluded Crane bought it on the spot and gave him a $1500 advance on it. But, reading the play himself in cold blood after a lapse of time, Crane failed to discern the enormously comic aspect of it and, like Daly, gave it back to Sydney. The latter now approached Nat Goodwin with it—again insinuatingly laughed it into a $2,000 advance—and [illegible] again got it back. The third come-

dian that Sydney approached was Roland Reed—and this time he extracted by means of his brobdingnagian laughter another $1,500—in due time once again getting the manuscript back. Then he accosted Daly and told him that he had proved what he set out to prove. '*Now* will you let me have another play to adapt?' bade Sydney triumphantly. 'Yes,' replied Daly, 'and when you finish the job, you may also read it to me. If you make me laugh as you made Crane, Goodwin and Reed laugh, I'll give you an even more substantial advance than they gave you. If you don't, you in turn agree to ask nothing for your work.' 'Fair!' said Sydney. 'I agree!' And Daly handed him a manuscript. Sydney beamed his way home. . . . He was full of anticipatory chuckles. . . . He unwrapped the manuscript. . . . The play was 'Œdipus Rex.' "

"Yes, I remarked, peering at the Lederer through my eye-glass, "yes—I am certain it was the cravat."

"And here's one on Charlie Hoyt," pursued our friend, ostentatiously heedless of my reassurances on his unmistakable youth. "Hoyt was considerably miffed over a number of things concerned with the production of his farce 'A Rag Baby' and asked his friends' advice as to his future productions. Among others, he asked mine. I advised him to get rid of his producer, and go it himself. 'You've had plenty of experience by this time; why not pro-

duce your own plays?' I said to him. 'I think I will," he said in turn. His next play was 'A Bunch of Keys.' He gave his producer (Julian Mitchell) the boot, and proceeded to do the job himself. 'There's only one thing to remember,' I told him. 'Be firm; stand no monkey-business with your company!' 'I will,' he answered. 'Watch your uncle Charles.'

"On the fourth day of rehearsals, Hoyt began to notice that while the principals were in the theatre on time, the chorus girls straggled in all the way from twenty minutes to an hour late. So he posted a bulletin, couched in very positive language, insisting that the girls present themselves for the next morning's rehearsal at ten o'clock sharp. The next morning came—and again the girls straggled in twenty, thirty, forty-five minutes and an hour late. Hoyt was boiling—he always became excited easily. He bided his time till the last of the stragglers came in. Then he called the girls together on the stage. For a full minute he eyed them, as a hungry lion eyes the pigeons that it is about to devour. Then—'You're all a bunch of harlots!' he yelled. 'You stay up all night dissipating, drinking and carousing, and then come down here the next morning an hour late! You're all an immoral lot of pros-
·d you're fired!'

ıen immediately got together a new

quorum of girls and, the next morning, began rehearsals anew. Just as he was beginning, one of the girls whom he had berated and fired the previous morning edged her way to him and cried out at the top of her voice: 'Mr. Hoyt, you insulted me! I am not like those other girls! I have been in the theatre for only seven months; I'm a virtuous girl; I'm a virgin; and here'—at this point she shoved a paper into Hoyt's hand—'is something that'll prove it!'

"Hoyt opened the document and looked at it. It was a doctor's certificate.

" 'Well?' asked the girl.

" 'It's no good,' said Hoyt, handing the doctor's certificate back to her. 'It's dated yesterday.' "

I nodded my head. I meditatively bit my lower lip. "Yes, yes," I observed, "it was the cravat: the more I look, the surer I am. Yes, yes, it was the cravat."

Our Lederer made haste to hold a flame to my segar and bade me put a couple of the kingly weeds in my pocket.

"Then, too, here's one on Charlie Frohman," he beamfully went on, the palm of his left hand still cupping the cravat. "When, in the days of the close Syndicate affiliation, Klaw and Erlanger secured the manuscript of a play, they usually got Charlie Frohman's judgment of it before they pro-

duced it. Charlie was, so to speak, their play adviser. Accordingly, when the manuscript of 'Ben Hur' came into their hands, they got Joe Brooks to take it over to Frohman and ask his opinion of it. Frohman read it and sent back word that the thing didn't stand a ghost of a chance. Klaw and Erlanger, however, had enough faith in the play to get a production ready and, hopeful that Frohman might change his mind—since they considered him most often an infallible guesser—urged him to see the dress rehearsal and give them his opinion of the play in actual production. Frohman came, sat through the play, and repeated that it would close in two weeks. The rest is history. 'Ben Hur' made over $2,000,000.

"There's a somewhat similar one on Lee and Jake Shubert," our Lederer continued, his hand still hiding his neckerchief. "The Shuberts had lost about $200,000 on two successive musical comedy failures at the Casino, to be specific, on 'Winsome Winnie' and 'The Runaways,' and were very eager to obtain a first-rate musical comedy with which to recoup their losses. They summoned Robert B. Smith and told him what they wanted. 'We don't want any more second-rate things—we're through with them,' they said to Smith. 'We want a [illegible] medy book that will hold water. Can [illegible] ne? This time, give us a libretto that

we can be proud of.' Smith was dubious. 'You really want a first-rate libretto?' he asked them. They assured him that they did. 'All right,' said Smith, 'I'll do my best for you.'

"A month later, Smith notified the Shuberts that he was ready to read them the results of his labour.

" 'Well, how about it, gentlemen?' he asked, when the reading was finished.

"The Shuberts groaned. 'If that's the best you can do, Smith, we're sorry for you, that's all we can say!' they observed.

"The libretto which Smith, by way of testing their assurance that they wanted a first-rate musical comedy book, had read to them, was 'The Pirates of Penzance!' "

"The Shuberts," I protested, "are the Chauncey Depews of the theatre: whenever anyone has a comic story to tell, he fastens it upon them. I am not sure that it is the cravat. Yet perchance you have something better up the sleeve of reminiscence."

"But," our friend protested in turn, "that's one of the few *true* stories about the Shuberts. And remember that I didn't fasten the Ben Hur story on them. Furthermore, here's another true one not on the Shuberts, but on my old confrère, Sandy Dingwall. Dingwall, Jacob Litt's managerial partner, was fond of imagining himself an expert play picker. Each season at the time of which I

speak, he was due to produce in McVickers' Theatre, in Chicago, a new play or two and he would make the settling upon what play he was to produce the occasion of much brow-wrinkling, throat-clearing and oracular speculation. The heavy profundity of M. de Dingwall on these occasions became a source of great amusement to his friends, among whom was Walter Hackett, the playwright. Hackett determined to have some fun with Dingwall—and also, incidentally, make the latter pay for it. Accordingly, he caused rumours to be brought to the Dingwall ear that he, Hackett, had just completed the first act of a new play that promised to be a theatrical property worth many thousands of dollars. These rumours and whispers were carried to the ear of my friend with such adroitness that he promptly fell into the trap and asked Hackett to read the act to him. Hackett arranged the meeting, sat down, opened a small ledger which he had brought with him, and began to read. Dingwall hung onto Hackett's words and, when the latter came to the end and slammed the book shut, pulled $500 in cash out of his trousers' pocket, pushed it into Hackett's hand, and thus obtained from the latter the rights to the play when it was finished.

" 'But,' said Hackett, 'you had better take the act home with you tonight and read it again at your

leisure.' Whereupon he handed the ledger over to Dingwall, made certain that the $500 had not fallen out of his pocket, and departed. Dingwall took the ledger home with him that night, pulled a comfortable chair up under his reading lamp, and prepared to re-enjoy his purchase. He lighted a fat cigar, crossed his legs, propped the book upon one knee and, in high anticipation of the renewed relish to come, opened the book. The pages, he found, were completely blank. Hackett had extemporaneously 'read' him a hash of all the plays he had ever seen: a medley of everything from 'Leah the Forsaken' to 'The Black Crook'!

"But let me vary the performance and tell one on myself," continued the Lederer, scarcely pausing to suck in a breath. "The best burlesque writer of earlier Broadway days was a man named Leonard Grover. At the height of 'The Mikado' wave, Grover was commissioned by M. B. Leavitt to write a burlesque of that comic opera for Leavitt's then celebrated Rentz-Santley company. I had the job of staging the burlesque. But when the time arrived to stage the burlesque, there was no burlesque to stage. Grover, who had been telling us how beautifully the burlesque was coming on, actually hadn't touched a finger to it. Kit Clarke, Leavitt's company manager, worked himself up into a state bordering upon nervous collapse. Time was short;

the show was soon to open; what was to be done? Full of confidence, I jumped into the breach. 'I will write the burlesque!' I said. 'You?' Clarke howled, 'what do you know about writing burlesque?' 'Nothing,' I replied, 'but just watch your boy George.'

"The show opened and my 'burlesque' proved a great hit.

" 'Hit or no hit,' Clarke said to me, 'it's a hell of a burlesque. Why, you haven't changed a line of the original!'

" 'True enough,' I returned, 'but you will observe that I had the sagacity to put comic putty noses on the characters!'

"It was the truth. All I did was to put a green putty nose on the Mikado, a bright yellow one on Nanki-Poo, a purple one on Ko-Ko, a red one on Pooh-Bah, a striped one on Pish-Tush, a large hooked one on Nee-Ban, a squashy one on Katisha, and three brilliant pumpkin coloured ones on Yum-Yum, Pitti-Sing and Peep-Bo."

"But," I interjected, "where is the joke on you? So far as I can make out, the joke was on the public."

"Not at all," responded our Lederer. "The joke was on me. The public was so fond of 'The Mikado' that it took my putty nose burlesque of it 'straight': that is, it wasn't my putty nose burlesque

that the public enjoyed and laughed at, but the Gilbert and Sullivan thing itself. The applause that we had mistaken for my putty noses was in reality applause for 'The Mikado' behind the putty noses. That ended my conceit as a confecter of burlesque."

"Good," I remarked. "Now that you have thus shrewdly exercised the necessary precaution to keep the reader of this chapter from regarding you as an unduly vain fellow, which would alienate his sympathy, let us proceed confidently to a few more tales at the expense of other magnificos of your day."

"There you go again, dammit!" exploded the Lederer. "There you go again with that 'your day' stuff! To hear you talk, one would think I was as much of an antique as John B. Stetson."

I waved an impugning hand. An aggrieved look was permitted to cross my features. "You wrong me, sir," I said at length, my voice rich with emotion. "In the words of M. Tullius Cicero, 'Cum in theatro imperiti homines, rerum annium rudes ignarique, consederant, tum bella inutilia suscipiebant, tum seditiosos homines rei publicae praeficiebant, tum optime meritos cives e civitate eiciebant.' "

"Well," drawled our friend, blowing his nose, "you may be right, but I have a feeling that—

"If you doubt my sincerity," I interrupted, "recall the words of the scarcely less illustrious M. Aulus Gellius, "Maiora autem dicuntur auspicia habere, quia eorum auspicia magis rata—"

"All right!" shouted the Lederer; "have it your own way—make me out as old as The Battle of Yorktown if you want to—but for God's sake quit talking Spanish. Here's one on Paula Edwardes, one of the best remembered of the Casino stars, a beauty in 'her day'—as your damned phrase has it—and one of the toasts of the Broadway of another time. But there comes, oh woe, a day when even the most dazzlingly pretty actress loses the lustre of youth and, losing it, finds difficulty in getting work. Thus, Paula Edwardes—when her youth faded, faded simultaneously from view. At least, I didn't hear of her or see her for something like twelve years. Then, one afternoon, the boy in my outer office came in and told me that there was a young girl outside who had a letter of introduction to me and wished to see me. I told him to send the girl in. There entered, with the slouchy walk affected by all the young girls of that particular time, a creature tricked out in complete cutie regalia: big, floppy hat, white baby collar, hair close to the nape of her neck and gathered with a broad black silk bow. 'What is it you wish?' I asked. 'I have a letter to you from my aunt, Miss Paula Edwardes,

whom you must surely remember,' she answered, her head bowed and her face concealed by the big, floppy hat. I took the letter, and read that Paula Edwardes wanted me to give the bearer, her niece, a trial in musical comedy: 'I know this is the age of very young girls,' the note went on, 'and my niece, who is only nineteen, ought to fit into something you are doing. She has had some experience and can sing and dance very well.'

"I pretended to read the note through twice, and then told the bearer how very sorry I was that I had nothing in rehearsal, nothing scheduled at the moment—that I would, however, keep her in mind, etc., etc. She left, and my heart ached. For I had recognized her for all her elaborate cutie make-up, for all the concealment of her big, floppy hat. The 'niece' was Paula Edwardes herself. She had got herself up like a nineteen year old girl in order to fool me, to have me offer her work and then, when I offered it, to lift up her head from under the hat and prove to me that, since she had fooled *me,* she could equally well fool an audience. And when she saw, or felt, that I had seen through her stratagem, she was too hurt to confess, and silently left me."

"A wistful tale—a touching *conte,*" I noted. "You bring a tear to this old nose. Pray, professor, liven up the party with something a bit jazzy."

"Even so," responded our friend. "Here, in a different tempo, is another one on George W. Lederer."

"The name is familiar," I observed. "I have heard you speak well of him often. Go on."

"The first experiment I ever made in the revue form—the first experiment in this form made in America—was, as you doubtless recall, 'The Passing Show,' " began our mentor. "I got the idea for such a revue when I organized Hermann's Trans-Atlantique Vaudevilles in 1889. It then occurred to me that a show made up of high-class vaudeville acts deftly strung together with dialogue and chorus numbers might prove a successful novelty. (I may say, incidentally, that when I outlined my idea to our Ben Hur clairvoyant, Charlie Frohman, he said the thing was not feasible, and would never go.) I was so enthusiastic about the idea that I began work on it within the next year. I spent several years elaborating the plan and gradually got the revue into definite shape. That is, I got the song numbers together, worked out the dance numbers, had a travesty of 'Sowing the Wind' (one of the big dramatic successes of the day) written, got Captain Alfred Thompson to work up an half hour act called 'Around the Operas in Thirty Minutes,' hired the actors and got the scenery painted. Then, I called rehearsals. These went along smoothly

for three weeks when, one day, John E. Henshaw, the leading comedian, stepped to my side on the stage and said: 'You've got everything in this show but funny lines.'

"I asked him what he meant. 'Why,' he said, 'take me! I'm supposed to be the comedian of the show, and what have I got? I've got exactly *one* comic line at the start of the first act. How in the name of Heaven do you expect me to do anything with one lonely line?'

" 'Well,' I asked him, not without a touch of sarcasm, since his manner rather annoyed me, 'how many comic lines do you customarily have to have to make an impression?'

" 'At least thirty,' he replied, my sarcasm missing him completely.

" 'The one line you have is satisfactory to you, you say? Would you be sufficiently satisfied with twenty-nine additional lines as good as that one line?' I asked, my sarcasm getting its second wind.

" 'Sure,' he responded ingenuously.

" 'Well then, Henshaw,' I said, my sarcasm now getting its third wind, 'I'll tell you what you do. You say you like your one comic line. Repeat it twenty-nine times throughout the show at any time you like.' . . . And having thus completely floored the fellow, as I imagined, I turned my back, walked off, and devoted myself to other matters.

"Imagine my surprise when, at the next day's rehearsal, Henshaw actually began to repeat his one comic line, as I had ironically suggested to him. I thought at first, and quite naturally, that he in turn was waxing sarcastic at my expense, and I determined when the first act was through to call him down for his presumption. Not wishing to interrupt the act—since we were on the eve of the final rehearsals—I sat out front and watched Henshaw's antics, my choler rising as he kept on repeating the line twice—three times—four times—five times—

"Suddenly, however, a shock came over me. I began to realize, on the fifth repetition of the line, that not only was Henshaw doing the thing in all seriousness but, to boot, that his device of repeating the line that was in itself not funny actually—by virtue of the constant repetition—made it funny. By the time the second act got under weigh, with Henshaw still repeating the line every ten minutes, he had me laughing heartily. And by the time he was at his twenty-sixth repetition of the line, he had won me completely. And when the show opened, it was Henshaw's one line repeated thirty times that went a long way toward making the revue a success. That line—you will recognize it at once—was 'It's a good thing; push it along.' It became the catchword of its time, and it inaugurated the procession

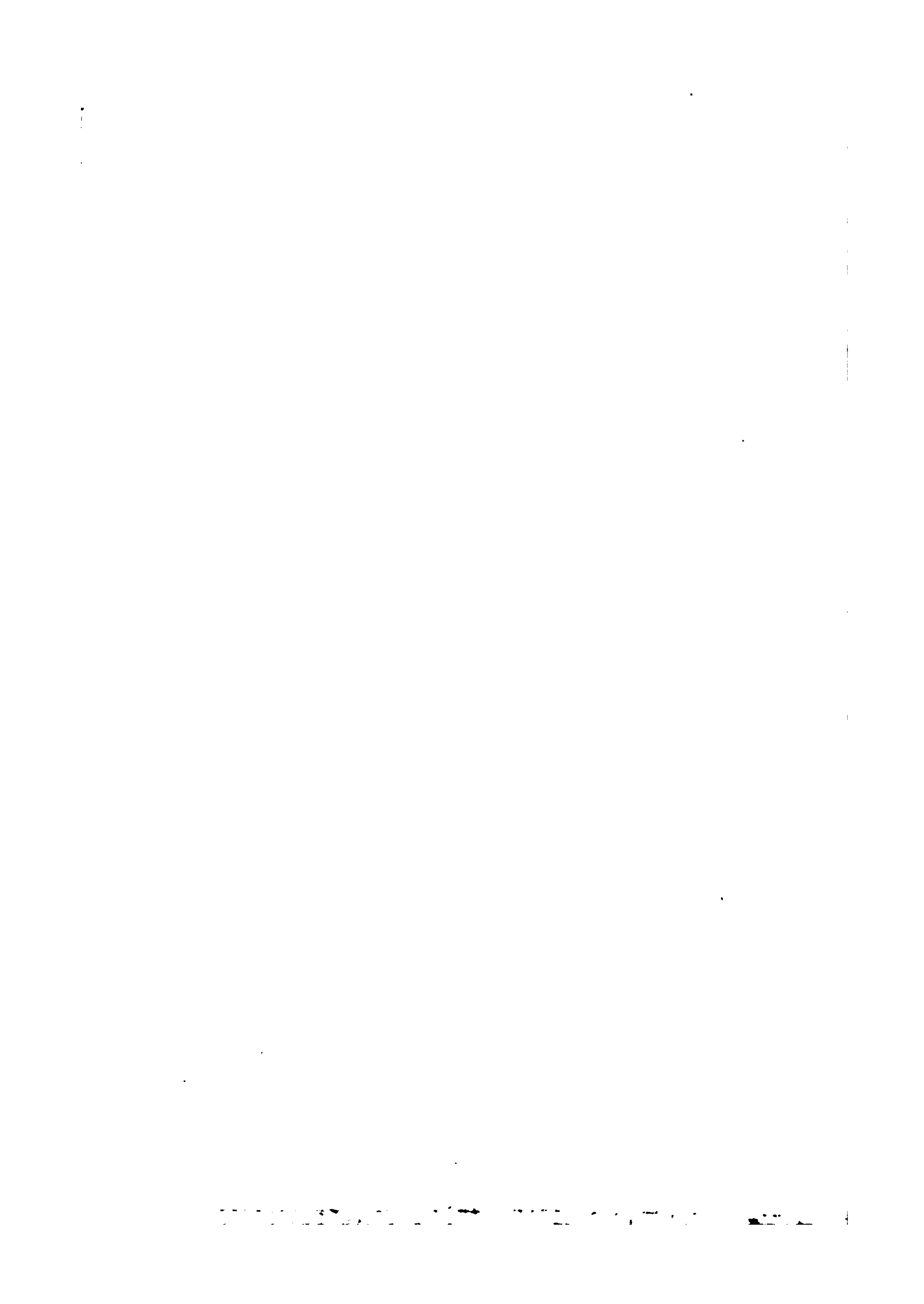
of so-called single gag lines in the many music shows that followed."

My hand went to my collar. I pulled it open. I—

"What are you doing?" whooped Lederer.

"You have done your darndest; you have entertained us well, old cock," replied I. "As a mark of our appreciation, I am giving you *my* cravat."

THE END



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